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OFFICIAL REPORT

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AND NORTHERN IRELAND
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HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 183**

FOURTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1990-91

House of Commons

Monday 17 December 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Fund

1. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to meet representatives of voluntary organisations to discuss the social fund.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): We frequently meet representatives of voluntary organisations on social security issues, including the social fund.

Mr. Clarke: Has the Minister had an opportunity to read the excellent article in *The Scotsman* this morning, written by Ruth Wishart, on the social fund? Does not it concern the Minister that she found it necessary to quote Mr. Jack McGregor, the chairperson of the Disability Income Group, saying that the fund had been catastrophic for people with disabilities? Given that it is a fund based on loans rather than grants, that it is immensely complicated to apply and that it is as mean-minded as the poll tax, will the Minister get rid of it as quickly as possible?

Mr. Scott: No, I am afraid that I have not yet had the chance to have my daily read of *The Scotsman*. I should in any case disagree with Mr. McGregor, although I am a considerable fan of the contribution that he makes in Scotland, and particularly to the workings of the Disability Income Group, but that is not an accurate description of the social fund. It is a mixture of loans and grants—2·5 million loans and 500,000 grants have been given so far. As I think that hon. Gentleman knows, in some 35,000 cases in 1989-90, those who applied for loans were in practice given grants because it was thought that that was more appropriate.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, under its previous rules, the social fund was escalating out of all control? Is he aware that my local office in Lancaster is operating within proper bounds and has had no problems in operating the new rules?

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend. Single payments were running at £40 million in 1979-80 and had risen to £335 million by 1985-86. I do not believe that single payments in the old form would have been sustainable, whatever party was in government, and the social fund has proved to be flexible and fair.

Mr. Frank Field: Is the Minister aware that some of my constituents who have literally nothing, not even a single stick of furniture, are refused help from the social fund? Does he consider that to be satisfactory, and if he does not, what does he propose to do about it?

Mr. Scott: The vast majority of those who are turned down for community care grants are turned down because they do not fulfil the basic eligibility conditions for community care grants.

Mr. Field: They have nothing.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt write to me about individual cases as they come to his notice. He knows that, in the longer run, we are looking forward to the result of the work that is being done for us by the social policy research unit at York. We shall then be able to have

a proper assessment, on a clear and broad statistical basis, of whether the social fund is fulfilling the needs for which it was established.

Community Charge

2. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he proposes to make any changes in the regulations for poll tax rebates.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): We are currently consulting the local authority associations on regulations for changes to the community charge benefit scheme from next April, largely of a technical nature, and on two other instruments relating to subsidy matters.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State accept that we want changes that are more than of a technical nature, because, until the poll tax is scrapped, we need to improve the rebate system to help those least able to pay it? Welcome steps would include abolition of the need to pay 20 per cent., an increase of the level at which rebates are payable and changing the tariff income on savings.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, during the introduction of the community charge benefit scheme, the taper was made substantially more generous than under the old rate rebate scheme, which extended help a good deal further up the income scale. My right hon. Friend the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, now Prime Minister, made a significant improvement in the capital rules at the time of the Budget.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is not it the case that half the people receiving community charge rebate receive a discount rate of 80 per cent., which is no small beer? Is not the remaining 20 per cent. no more than the cost of a pint of beer a week?

Mr. Newton: Certainly, many of those receiving community charge benefit—including all those who are on income support—receive an 80 per cent. rebate.

Mr. Kirkwood: May I press the Secretary of State on the 20 per cent. community charge? A cause of some of the worst hardship in my constituency is the abolition of the old 100 per cent. rate rebate and the introduction of the 80 per cent. maximum rebate that is available to community charge payers. Is the rebate for community charge payers part of the review? Is it possible that it will be abolished as well as the poll tax?

Mr. Newton: Rebates, or community charge benefit, as it currently is, follow on from the consideration that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is giving to the system in a wider sense. The hon. Gentleman knows that the basis of the present arrangement is the view that it is right that everyone should make a contribution. Benefit rates were adjusted to take account of that when the scheme was introduced.

National Insurance

3. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost to business if employers' national insurance contributions were levied at 5 per cent. on all employees with earnings below the national insurance threshold.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Michael Jack): On the limited information available, I estimate the cost to employers at around £200 million a year in national insurance contributions. In addition, employers would have to bear substantial administrative costs from the extra record keeping involved.

Mr. Paice: May I first, say that it is a great pleasure for me to be able to welcome my hon. Friend to his new ministerial position, which brings him to the Government Front Bench—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I count him as one of my most long-standing friends in this place. It is a great stroke of personal good fortune that I am able to congratulate him.

Is my hon. Friend aware that the burden of the £200 million to which he referred would fall especially heavily on businesses such as those that are run by horticultural growers and packers in my constituency, who rely on part-time and casual workers for their labour force? If the proposed Labour party tax on employers were to be implemented, it would mean that those businesses would lose their competitiveness and their work force, with the result that unemployment would increase even further.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his generous and warm words of welcome to me at the Government Dispatch Box. I shall take up the more general point that arises from his comments and not respond directly to his question on agriculture. The proposal to amend national insurance contributions on the basis of the lower earnings limit would be a positive disincentive to the creation of part-time employment that is valued by so many, especially by women who want to return to the labour market.

Mr. Skinner: When will the Minister deal with the question that was raised by the Audit Commission and others about employers of various descriptions taking as much as £400 million out of the pockets of employees in tax and national insurance contributions and not handing them over to the tax authorities and Government Departments? When will the Government take steps to ensure that proper auditing takes place and that the money that is paid over by employees goes to the right accounts and not into employers' pockets?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman raises an extremely important issue. Efforts are being made to strengthen auditing procedures by the fraud investigation section of the Department. More inspectors are being employed, and I am certain that they will address themselves to the matters that the hon. Gentleman has drawn to my attention.

Pensioners

4. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra support has been directed to lower-income pensioners in the last two years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Miss Ann Widdecombe): Income-related benefits for pensioners have been increased substantially over the past two years. In addition to the normal annual upratings we directed an extra £200 million to less well-off elderly and disabled pensioners in October 1989 and will be directing an extra £80 million to pensioners aged 60 to 74

from next April. Taken together, those increases will bring the total annual extra help for pensioners since October 1989 to over a quarter of a billion pounds.

Mr. Janman: May I warmly welcome my hon. Friend to the Government Front Bench? She and I have had offices near to each other for the past three years.

May I congratulate my hon. Friend on her answer to my question? She will be well aware that there are some, including some Labour Members, who often try to imply that the United Kingdom is rather behind its European neighbours when it comes to support for the elderly. Will my hon. Friend confirm that that is far from the truth and that Britain is near the top of the league when it comes to supporting its elderly in terms of the percentage of public expenditure that is spent in that direction? Does my hon. Friend agree that any massive across-the-board increase, as proposed by the likes of the Pensioners Protection party, would not reach those who need help the most because of the loss of benefit entitlement that would occur if such a policy were pursued?

Miss Widdecombe: I thank my hon. Friend for his generous welcome. The real Pensioners Protection party is the party that has brought about a 31 per cent. growth in pensioners' income during its time in office. The European figures clearly demonstrate that the richer countries spend a larger share of national income on social protection. That underlines the Government's view that only a successful economy can generate the wealth to pay for the welfare state. There are aspects of the pension arrangements in other EEC countries that we would not welcome, such as the link with earnings, which means that low earners receive low pensions.

Mr. Winnick: Pensioners, and especially pensioner couples, have been cheated out of £20 a week because of the break in the link with earnings. Is the Minister aware of our deep concern about the health of so many poor pensioners who, at this very moment, are in great danger because they simply do not have sufficient financial means to heat their homes to an adequate level? Do not the Minister and the Secretary of State realise that the cold weather payment regulations are far too inflexible and bureaucratic? Is not it absolutely scandalous that millions of pensioners on small incomes are forced to live in inadequately heated homes because they are denied any extra help from the Government? When will the Government take action on that?

Miss Widdecombe: It is because we recognise the importance of pensioners—and, indeed, others—being able to heat their homes adequately that there have been many reviews of cold weather payments. We made improvements in the winters of both 1988-89 and 1989-90. We are now having further consultations with the Meteorological Office about weather station areas because there are local variations that need to be examined.

Mr. Winnick: What a farce.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Miss Widdecombe: I cannot believe that those who are trying to heat their homes in some of the areas most severely affected would share the amusement of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) about that process.

Mr. Winnick: It is not amusement. I am furious.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Has my hon. Friend noted that next year all pensioners will receive a rise in their pensions in excess of the current level of inflation, and which by next April will be substantially in excess of inflation? Will not that be of great advantage to all pensioners, and especially those on lower incomes?

Miss Widdecombe: That rise, together with the uprating in income support, our review of cold weather payments and other measures, shows clearly that we are directing our resources to pensioners most in need. They will certainly benefit from the uprating——

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If an hon. Member is described by the sort of term that one hon. Member has just used to describe me, should not that hon. Member be forced to withdraw?

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear anything disorderly.

Ms. Short: I also welcome——

Mr. Ron Davies: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I assure you that we all clearly heard the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) as a rat. Will you confirm that that is an unparliamentary expression——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Did the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) call the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) a rat?

Mr. Jacques Arnold: I made no such reference.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear it.

Mr. Paice: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In order that the proceedings may continue, I withdraw the remark that you did not hear.

Ms. Short: I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box. As we shall be seeing rather more of each other now, I hope that she will manage to say something with which I can agree.

Will the hon. Lady confirm that the figures that she cited do not in any way make up for the massive cut in the value of pensions that the Government imposed when they broke the link with earnings? As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, that amounts to £12 a week for a single pensioner and £20 a week for a pensioner couple. Is she aware that that is causing real hardship for many pensioners? Is she further aware that Labour is committed to restoring that link and to an immediate increase, in addition to the uprating, of £5 a week for a single pensioner and £8 a week for a pensioner couple?

Miss Widdecombe: Perhaps the House should be aware that the costs of restoring that link—about £6 billion—mean that the average employee would face an extra £2·78 on his national insurance contributions and his employer an extra £5·34. Before we believe that the restoration of a link with earnings would substantially improve a pensioner's lot, perhaps we should reflect on the fact that the Labour Government linked pensions with earnings and brought about a 20 per cent. increase, which was

eroded to a mere 3 per cent. increase because of their other policies. Surely it is better to have a 31 per cent. increase in real terms than a 3 per cent. increase against a totally false base.

Mr. Brazier: May I also extend a warm welcome to my hon. Friend at the Dispatch Box? I very much enjoyed campaigning with her on many issues. In supporting her view that the Government have a much better record than their predecessor in looking after less well-off pensioners, may I draw her attention to the plight of one particular group—pensioners who are on modest incomes but also have savings? I suggest that, although the increase in capital limits was welcome, so long as we have a concept of notional income, we shall have a marginal rate of benefit withdrawal that makes saving unattractive to people approaching retirement.

Miss Widdecombe: I thank my hon. Friend for his warm welcome. Although I have some sympathy with his concerns, I should point out to him that, through the notional tariff and taper, those with very small savings benefit. It would be difficult to persuade those with little savings and little income that it was right or socially equitable to exempt large savings completely.

Income Support

5. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the current level of income support.

Mr. Newton: There are many levels of income support corresponding to the needs of particular groups, such as pensioners or families, and their individual circumstances. Our policy in replacing supplementary benefit was to create a clearer structure with a greater capacity to focus extra help on those most in need. Since 1988 we have given such extra help, over and above upratings, to families and children, disabled people, carers and pensioners.

Mr. Davies: I thank the Secretary of State for his answer. Is he aware that 87,000 households still have not had a penny increase in their benefit since 1987, despite inflation being 28 per cent. since then? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that those people form a special case? If the Government are determined to make the poil tax marginally less offensive, why will not the right hon. Gentleman remove from those 87,000 households the liability to pay the 20 per cent. statutory minimum of their poll tax?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman understands the basis of the transitional protection, which was extended in 1988. I think that he will acknowledge that one of the many helpful effects of the substantial increase in benefit rates, which is to take place next April, is that it will considerably reduce the number of people who will then be subject to transitional protection.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that income support is a much more flexible and effective way of targeting help towards vulnerable and needy groups than the old supplementary benefit system?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree and I suspect that that view is generally shared, even by those who wish beneift rates to be higher still.

Mrs. Mahon: The Secretary of State will be aware that one group of people—youngsters over the age of 18 in full-time education that does not attract a grant—are excluded from income support and have no income whatever. What does the right hon. Gentleman propose to do about that group?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady understands the position clearly. The Government's view is that, generally, if it is thought right that someone should be supported while he pursues his education, that is a matter for the local education authorities, which have adequate powers.

Sick and Disabled People

6. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average annual real increase in spending on the long-term sick and disabled in the periods 1973-74 to 1978-79 and 1978-79 to 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: We have increased spending on the long-term sick and disabled by £4·1 billion in real terms over the past 11 years—an increase of 98 per cent.

Mr. Gregory: Now that my right hon. Friend has announced those excellent results, will he confirm that help for those who are disabled will be increased even further as a result of the steps announced in "The Way Ahead" earlier this year?

Mr. Scott: We are making progress in Committee on the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill, which will introduce those two benefits. Extra resources—over and above what was planned before we published "The Way Ahead"—will be spent in each year until the end of the decade.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that, for most disabled people, the last time Good King Wenceslas looked out was when their benefits were linked to average earnings? How much have the Government saved by breaking that link after 1979? Is not it totally unacceptable that the Minister makes no mention of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the increase in expenditure since 1979 has been for further beneficiaries of allowances introduced by the last Labour Government and their predecessors?

Mr. Scott: As I have said to the right hon. Gentleman more than once, he must surely welcome, as I do, the fact that we have extended the coverage of benefits—some of which were introduced by a former Labour Government. The same number of disabled people existed when a Labour Government were in office; there was no sudden dramatic increase when we came to office. We have not only marketed the benefits and encouraged the highest possible take-up—in the teeth of some criticism from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), I may add—but have substantially improved the coverage of attendance allowance, mobility allowance and invalid care allowance. In addition, we have introduced the carers' premium and added age-related benefits to the severe disablement allowance. In several significant ways, we have extended and improved the coverage of those benefits.

Maintenance

7. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average maintenance assessment under the current system; and what is the average cost of supporting a mother and child through the benefit system.

Mr. Jack: The White Paper, "Children Come First", confirmed that the average award for child maintenance under the current system was £25 a week. About £2 billion a year in income support is currently paid to lone-parent families. The average payment is just over £50 per week. That figure is higher than it would otherwise be, because less than one quarter of lone parents on income support are receiving the maintenance that is their due.

Mr. Burns: Does my hon. Friend agree that that answer is clear evidence that more must be done on assessment and enforcement, to ensure that more absent fathers contribute to the upkeep of their children? What hope or help can he offer to a mother of two in my constituency who cannot receive the child support that a court has granted to her because her former husband has absconded to Australia and refuses to pay any money? That mother cannot take her former husband to court in Australia because she cannot get hold of his home address.

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my hon. Friend on pursuing his interest in the subject. He was one of the hon. Members who contributed, on his constituents' behalf, to the response to our White Paper "Children Come First". He is absolutely right that we need to deal more effectively and consistently with child maintenance. That is precisely why the Child Support Agency will be made the subject of a Bill for which we shall seek all-party support.

My hon. Friend asked about his constituent. He will be aware that liable relative work is already undertaken within the social security system. I cannot comment specifically on the case that he raised with me, but, if he cares to write to me, we shall do our best to assess it and to give advice. Finally, the new Child Support Agency will have powers to pursue people for maintenance liability wherever they go.

Mr. Flynn: Did the Minister see the report at the weekend by Anne Searle, the Birmingham child employment officer, which stated that the epidemic of child employment throughout the country stems not from children working because they want to, but from having to as a result of the low incomes of their families? Does he recall the case of a 12-year-old child who was discovered working an 11-hour shift in a bakery and the 15-year-old who was killed returning from her job selling kitchen equipment door to door? Is he aware that in a school in my constituency, 75 per cent. of the sixth form work part time and that half of them have jobs both at the weekends and during the week? Is not he concerned that that will lead to a deterioration in their health and that it is also a threat to their education?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman highlights the point about "Children Come First", whose aim is to ensure that when families should be receiving income in the form of maintenance, that money is obtained and given to them. We are aware of the problems about family income. That is why the White Paper, which I hope the hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to read, pays particular attention to improving the availability of family credit for women who want to return to work and raise their income. That is why, in any maintenance payments that are obtained, the first £15 will be disregarded. We take the hon. Gentleman's points seriously, but I argue that "Children Come First" is a testament to the way in which we have approached the issue.

Mr. Kilfedder: Does the Minister agree that the present system for the enforcement of maintenance orders is totally inadequate and that it is important that maintenance arrears should not be allowed to accumulate in the magistrates courts? Does he also agree that everything must be done to pursue the absent parent to ensure that he looks after his children and is responsible for their maintenance?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on the point that led to the publication of the White Paper. The Government realised that the present position was inconsistent. The liable relative work carried out by the Department of Social Security also needs bolstering. To that end, we are not simply waiting until the House, we hope, approves the Bill on child maintenance; steps are already being taken to improve the liable relative work of the Department and to strengthen it through the legal enforcement Bill which is in the other place. We have also published in the White Paper a clear formula by which maintenance will be pursued and the amount of maintenance determined.

Ms. Short: I, too, welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Dispatch Box. Has he yet had time to read the National Audit Office report on lone parents which is very critical of his Department? Is he aware that the report shows that under this Government, the percentage of lone parents on means-tested benefits has grown from 38 per cent. to a shocking 72 per cent. and that the number of those receiving maintenance while on benefits has slumped from 50 to 23 per cent?

Will the Minister take a fresh look at the issue and drop his colleagues' outrageous proposal to punish, with a 20 per cent. fine, women who are too frightened to name the absent parent and pursue him for maintenance? Will he instead attend to his Department's deficiencies that have led to the enormous slump in the number of women on benefits claiming maintenance?

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Lady for her warm words of welcome and I look forward to our exchanges across the Dispatch Box. However, her final point illustrates why "Children Come First" was published and the need for the Bill that will follow. Only 30 per cent. of lone mothers and 3 per cent. of lone fathers receive maintenance and that is precisely why we want to take action in that area.

We are aware of the sensitivities raised by the central part of the hon. Lady's question. As she will know, the period of consultation on those elements in the White Paper on which comments were invited ended last Friday. A number of organisations have drawn our attention to that important point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he understands the sensitivities. He also understands that rape will be allowed as a reason for not fining people. However, there will be other issues and officers will be trained to deal with them sensitively. We are also taking into account in framing legislation the comments that have arisen from the consultations.

Occupational Pensions

8. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the change in real terms since 1979 of the value of income from occupational pensions.

Mr. Newton: Pensioners' incomes from occupational pensions grew by 77 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1987, the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that pensioners are among the most deserving of groups and, alas, among the least powerful in our society? Does he agree further that, in financial terms, those who have occupational pension cover have done extremely well, but that, by definition, people with only state pension cover have done somewhat less well? Therefore, is not the way ahead for the Government and employers to continue to encourage occupational pensions and, for that matter, portable pensions, and in the interim to be particularly generous at the next uprating of the state retirement pension?

Mr. Newton: It is the aim of our policies—they have been successful—to encourage the continued development of occupational and personal pensions. In referring to the substantial growth in pensioners' average incomes that has taken place, largely as a result of increased occupational pensions, I have never shied away from acknowledging that quite a number of pensioners still have not benefited. That is precisely why, in October 1989, we steered additional help to those least well-off pensioners through the income support system; we shall do so again next April.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Secretary of State agree that some people on fixed occupational pensions have not benefited from the increase of latter years and that they may have been penalised most in the pension scheme? Has any study been done of that sector?

Mr. Newton: Some of that group will be among those, depending on how small their occupational pension is, who may benefit or have benefited from increases in income support rates. We sought to tackle the underlying problem in last year's Social Security Act, as the hon. Gentleman will remember, by extending the provisions requiring in many more circumstances the uprating of occupational pensions.

Mr. Favell: The group that suffers most from a high community charge is pensioners with small occupational pensions who are just over the capital or income limit. Those people are patently honest and nothing hurts them more than seeing others refuse to pay their community charge. Has not the time come to ensure that everybody registers for the community charge and to say that, unless they can prove that they are registered, they should not receive social benefit of any kind, whether it be child benefit, income support or any other?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend takes me a little wide of the responsibilities that bring me to the Dispatch Box today, but I have no doubt that suggestion will be noted in the appropriate quarters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Who will pick up the £5,900 million bill for the Government's error in forecasting the costs of switching from the state earnings-related pension scheme to private occupational schemes? Will it be the taxpayer?

Mr. Newton: There is no such error. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will tell me who in the next century would pick up the bill for the unsustainable promises made by his party.

Pensioners

9. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average pensioner's income from savings over the periods 1974 to 1979 and 1979 to 1990.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend will wish to note that the latest available data show that, at 1987 prices, the average pensioner's income from savings fell from £10·70 per week in 1974 to £9·10 per week in 1979. But, by 1987, it had more than doubled to £20.90 per week.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: May I join other hon. Members in welcoming my hon. Friend to the Front Bench? Is not it most important that we encourage companies and all employers to pay occupational pension schemes? Is not one of the most important events since 1979 that private pensions have increased by more than 130 per cent. in real terms? Is not that a way in which to make sure that people are better-off and more self-sufficient? Private pension schemes mean that state pensions will be only the supernumeraries instead of the mainstay of families in the generation to come.

Miss Widdecombe: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome. He is, of course, absolutely right. The House will wish to note that the average income from an occupational pension has grown in value by 77 per cent. since 1979. In addition, 52 per cent. of all pensioners and 73 per cent. of recently retired pensioners now have occupational pensions. That is testimony to the Government's determination to encourage savings by that route.

Residential Care

10. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make an official visit to the York house residential home, Plaistow, to meet residents and staff to discuss levels of residential care attendance.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Spearing: Is the Secretary of State aware that although he will still be welcome there, York house residential home is closed? Is he further aware that that is because the Government have neglected to act on the findings of the Price Waterhouse report, which showed that the income of residential homes from social security is between £40 and £60 a week less than the general requirement? Will he now consult not only Price Waterhouse, but the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and Age Concern over this very important national problem? Does he understand that more homes will be closed, not only in east London but throughout the country, unless he acts quickly?

Mr. Newton: I am, of course, aware of the problems that have been reported in connection with that home. However, I am also aware that it appears that the problem

in that case and, for all I know, in many others, is somewhat more complicated than the hon. Gentleman allowed in his question. In particular, I understand that of those currently remaining in the home——

Mr. Spearing: There is no one there.

Mr. Newton: I am told that there are still a number of people in the home, not on income support but fully supported by the health authority, which must mean that they are in need not of residential care, but of nursing care. That, in turn, raises questions about whether the home was properly registered. If it had been registered as a nursing home, it would have received substantially more money each week for those residents and they would be facing a large increase next April. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that I do not dismiss his comments out of hand, but he should recognise that some of these problems are a great deal more complicated than is sometimes suggested in the newspapers.

THE ARTS

Royal Opera House

27. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will provide the management of the Royal Opera house with the funds required to undertake remedial construction tasks at that establishment.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): Development of the Royal Opera house will be funded principally from the proceeds of the development of land and commercial properties gifted to it by successive Governments. As my right hon. and learned Friend the former Minister for the Arts recently made clear, the Government are unable to make a further capital contribution. I am in close touch with the Royal Opera house management, which is now reconsidering the phasing and content of the project.

Dr. Howells: Is the Minister aware that although many people in this country admire the work of the Royal Opera house, there is nevertheless the feeling that the additional funds that are being made available for the sort of schemes which the Royal Opera house management wants to pursue will simply mean that additional precious funding will go towards putting some of the best-clad backsides in this country on some very expensive seats for a night out at the opera and that that will be done at the expense of many arts groups and organisations in other areas, especially Wales and the English regions?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman is being somewhat unfair. The Royal Opera house has increased its revenue both from sponsorship and from the box office sale of tickets in the past year. The amount of revenue that it receives in subsidy from the Arts Council has fallen as a percentage of its total revenue. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is thinking especially of the Welsh National Opera, for which he must naturally have a good deal of sympathy and support, which receives more than £2·5 million in grant from the Arts Council and £1·7 million from the Welsh Arts Council. I do not think that any other major organisation has its funding split in that manner.

Mr. Cormack: May I welcome my right hon. Friend to his new post and wish him every success in it? I thank him for the answer that he has just given, which showed a greater appreciation of the problem than did the questioner. Will he pay an early visit to the opera house to discuss the plans with the chairman and director, remembering that there is enormous earning potential from that development?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I realise that he has had a strong interest in the arts and heritage for many years. One of my first onerous duties as Minister for the Arts was to visit the Royal Opera house, where I had the great pleasure of seeing the Scottish Opera production of "Les Troyens". I was taken backstage after the performance not only to meet members of the cast, but to have pointed out to me how much the backstage area needs repair and redevelopment.

Mr. Fisher: May I welcome the Minister to his new job as the third holder of the office this year? I wish him well in his endeavours on behalf of the arts. He will be aware of the problems that he inherits from his predecessors, not least in general remedial construction—the crisis in our cultural buildings. There are holes in the roof of the Tate, the Victoria and Albert museum needs £100 million spent on it and the chairman of the Arts Council, Mr. Peter Palumbo, guesstimates that at least £1,000 million needs to be spent on our cultural buildings. In that new situation —at least it is new to him—will the Minister have the courage that his predecessors did not and face up to the evidence and the facts? Will he commission a national audit of arts buildings so that people round the country and hon. Members on both sides of the House can know the real position and how great is the task to be undertaken over the next 10 years?

Mr. Renton: First, I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks at the beginning of his questions. Secondly, he may have noticed that I have already answered a parliamentary question on our cultural buildings. I said that I was commissioning a survey to be carried out by a multi-faceted professional company into the building requirements of the major museums and galleries. I have asked for the company to report to me by summer next year. The hon. Gentleman should not underrate the settlements that both my predecessors obtained in the public expenditure rounds. In both cases, the settlements were well ahead of the rate of inflation and were welcomed as that.

I had been warned that in his questions the hon. Gentleman would almost invariably use the word "crisis." I suggest that he takes a leaf out of the book of Corporal Jones in "Dad's Army" and, instead of always throwing his arms in the air and shouting, "Crisis", he shouts "Don't panic!"

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister recognise that a commitment to the arts will be met if he takes on board the recommendation of the National Campaign for the Arts on the proportion of public spending which should be devoted to the arts—a modest 1 per cent. of gross domestic product, substantially below that of other European countries with comparable populations and revenues?

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for asking that. I have looked briefly at that survey and at the campaign. But as a fair-minded person the hon. Gentleman will realise that it is extremely difficult to compare like with like in this matter. As I understand it,

the comparative figure given for France, for example, does not take into account either the business sponsorship or private patronage that we have in Britain. The matter is well worth close study, but I doubt that whether is a case for leaping ahead in the manner in which the NCA suggests.

Young Musicians

28. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what support he provides to encourage young musicians.

Mr. Renton: I understand that the Arts Council, through which Government funds are channelled, supports a number of schemes such as Music for Small Groups to help young musicians, and Youth and Music to encourage young people to attend concerts.

Mr. Bowis: May I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend on escaping to the best possible job in the "House of Cards"? Has he had a chance to look at the quality of music in Britain and the standard of our young musicians, not least on those excellent occasions, the schools proms? Does he recognise that there is some anxiety in that world as a result of the problems in peripatetic music teaching? Will he take an early opportunity to discuss the matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I am advised that in view of the slightly open-ended ending of the fourth episode of "House of Cards" the BBC is planning a sequel. However, I do not yet know whether the BBC intends to entitle it "Minister for the Arts". I warmly applaud the schools proms season. I hope that that excellent season, organised by Music for Youth, will continue. It is an organisation funded by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science. As my hon. Friend clearly knows, it gives schoolchildren a chance to play in the best concert halls up and down the land.

I see no reason why the peripatetic music service to schools should suffer. I hope that valuable positions of that nature will not be threatened if local education authorities decide to delegate funds to schools. Schools might even choose to enhance music provision from their budgets—a move which I would support.

Mr. Tony Banks: I, too, congratulate the right hon. Gentleman. I hope that he manages to last at least until his next Question Time. He is welcome to come to Newham to see what we are doing. We have the Newham Academy of Music, which the local authority supports. I read in the newspapers that the Minister was looking carefully at local authority expenditure on the arts. Will he be prepared to talk to the Department of the Environment to make sure that adequate resources are put at the disposal of local authorities so that they can continue to give the support to the arts which the arts merit?

Mr. Renton: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's question. He will realise, probably better than I do, that local authorities' arts spending is discretionary, not mandatory. Certainly, if I received strong evidence that arts budgets were being cut wholly disproportionately, although I have no statutory powers I would seek to discuss the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to see whether he could bring to bear any gentle persuasion.

The hon. Gentleman's first point was his hope that I might be here for a long time. I remind him of the Latin tag, vita brevis est ars longa. I realise that my turbulent life as Chief Whip was short and I hope that with his help my life as Minister for the Arts will be longer.

Business Sponsorship

29. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on progress of the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Mr. Renton: I am delighted to have inherited such a successful scheme which has raised over £37 million in new money for the arts, including £12·28 million in Government awards. Recent research by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts shows that over 90 per cent. of sponsors contacted intend to continue. That is excellent news.

Mr. Butler: How popular is the business sponsorship incentive scheme outside the great metropolis?

Mr. Renton: I understand that about 75 per cent. of business sponsorship schemes are located outside London. Indeed, one of my first pleasant duties as Minister for the Arts was to hand over business sponsorship awards in Glasgow to Scottish companies.

Natural History Museum

35. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if, pursuant to the answer of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) of 26 November at column 619, he will make a statement on ministerial meetings with Sir Walter Bodmer in relation to staffing problems posed by the IPMS in connection with the natural history museum.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) met the chairman of trustees and director of the natural history museum on 1 November 1990 to discuss a wide range of issues concerning the museum. I share the view that the recent agreement between the natural history museum and the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists should be welcomed. It serves the best long-term interests of the museum and all concerned.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister visit the museum officially and meet IPMS representatives?

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for suggesting that I should add that to my list of travels and I shall think carefully about it. On Friday I had the opportunity of meeting the director of the natural history museum.

Mr. Dalyell: Members of IPMS.

Mr. Renton: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. I thought that he said the chairman of the museum. I had discussions with the director and he is satisfied with the agreement that has been reached so far, as the hon. Gentleman knows. I know that the hon. Gentleman has taken a close interest in this matter. Only one redundancy is likely to occur. The proper course is for the management to sort out the details of the agreement with IPMS. It is no

part of my work to interfere in this dispute. Clearly, if I found reason to believe that the agreement was not working, I would consider visiting the museum.

CIVIL SERVICE

Morale and Conditions

36. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he next intends to meet civil service trade union leaders to discuss morale in the service.

37. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what arrangements he has for discussing conditions with civil service trade union representatives; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I intend to follow the practice of my predecessors and look forward to meeting civil service trade union representatives whenever necessary.

Mr. Allen: I welcome the Minister to his new responsibilities. When he meets civil service trade union leaders, will he consider extending the terms and conditions that apply to their members to those who work in this House but are not members of civil service unions? He will be aware of the campaign led by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) for adequate staffing levels and payment, particularly for staff in the Refreshment Department. Will he discuss changing their terms of tenure to those which apply in the civil service, for which he is responsible?

Mr. Renton: I shall consider what the hon. Gentleman has said. He will be aware, however, that terms and conditions relating to pay in the civil service are not my responsibility but that of Treasury Ministers, particularly the Minister of State. I believe that the specific conditions in the House are more the responsibility of the Services Committee or the Commission rather than mine. I shall bring his comments to the attention of my colleagues.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister have a word with the Chairman of the Commission, who sits behind me, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—

Mr. Beith: Mr. Speaker is the Chairman.

Mr. Skinner: I mean the one who speaks in the House. The hon. Gentleman answered the letter that I sent to him and the Lord President of the Council about people in the Refreshment Department who will be paid the paltry sum of £3.50 an hour for working on Christmas eve and new year's eve. They will get no extra payment for that work. Surely they should not have to come in here on days when no Members will be here. If they do come, they should be given unsocial hours payments. Get something done about it and knock their heads together.

Mr. Renton: One of the pleasures of my time as Patronage Secretary was to listen to business questions and I remember that the Leader of the House regularly answered questions much along those lines, usually from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). No doubt that hon. Gentleman knows to whom to ask such a question, even if the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) does not.

Mr. Jessel: As the question on the Order Paper refers to morale, can my right hon. Friend tell us why it is that, whenever people in the public sector want to be paid more money, they always talk about their morale?

Mr. Renton: I suspect that the same applies in the private sector. I assure my hon. Friend that, from my office, I have seen no sign that there is anything wrong with morale in the civil service. The introduction of the executive agencies and, in many cases, pay related to performance and bonuses following good performance have been welcomed by the civil servants involved. I am responsible for the Civil Service Commission and applications through its competitions for fast-stream vacancies are 75 per cent. up on the same time last year. The European fast stream that we launched recently has proved extremely popular with applicants. I believe that morale in the civil service is fine.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that morale in the civil service is extremely high? We have a dedicated staff who are courteous and efficient and who obviously represent the best civil service in the world. Does my right hon. Friend also agree that those who are asking questions and shedding tears for people in the Refreshment Department should study closely what contribution they made to the Christmas bonus fund for the staff this year because many people have given little money?

Mr. Renton: I note with great pleasure what my hon. Friend said. No doubt colleagues on both sides of the House will follow his observations and rush promptly to make certain that they have made a good contribution to the staff fund.

Dr. Marek: Why, after all these years, will official Government advice to new entrants to the civil service no longer say that they should join a union to ensure that their views are represented and heard? Surely the Minister should put such puerile, Thatcherite games behind him. Does he at least recognise that a good and efficient union is in not only his interests, but those of the country?

Mr. Renton: I do not understand the background to the hon. Gentleman's question. After all, we have moved away from the closed shop. Union membership has become more and more voluntary and discretionary in the past 11 years of Conservative Government and we intend to continue in that direction in the civil service as in the private sector. There is no problem for me, because, as the hon. Gentleman might know, I have been a member of APEX—the Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staff—for the past 11 years. I am always delighted to meet other members of that union. The hon. Gentleman's comments are surprising, because we are not in the business of enforcing closed shops either in the public or the private sector.

Private Industry (Secondments)

38. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many civil servants were seconded to private industry in the last two financial years.

Mr. Renton: The figures on a calendar year basis are 432 in 1989, up from 311 in 1988. I welcome that trend and look for it to continue.

Mr. Marshall: May I join my hon. Friends in welcoming my right hon. Friend to his new post? I also welcome the trend, because such cross-fertilisation can only be mutually beneficial.

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind opening remarks. I wholly agree with his comment about cross-fertilisation. The figures have risen well. Secondments to industry have increased from 63 in 1977 to 432 in 1989. I am sure that much can be gained by both sides from the interchange of experience and knowledge of working practices. I share my hon. Friend's view that the trend should be greatly encouraged.

Press and Information Officers

39. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has any plans to co-ordinate the work of press and information officers in the civil service.

Mr. Renton: The existing longstanding arrangements will continue to operate.

Mr. Beith: Now that there is a new press officer at No. 10 who does not have the service-wide responsibilities acquired by his predecessor, will we enter a new era in which the line between Government policy and party matters is clearly drawn and the press office at Downing street does not blacken the character of, and put the knife into, Ministers, or will old habits come back quickly?

Mr. Renton: I am amazed that the hon. Gentleman asked that supplementary question, although I thought he might because he has a gift for turning a silk purse back into a sow's ear. I have no doubt that both the gentlemen who have been appointed—Mr. Devereau as head of the profession, as he is technically called, and Mr. O'Donnell, as No. 10's press officer—will fulfil their duties and responsibilities very well.

Race Relations

40. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if his office has circulated the race relations employment advisory service report on the Department of Employment to other Departments.

Mr. Renton: The report was circulated to Departments in 1986. More recently my office has published a programme for action on race to ensure equality of opportunity throughout the civil service.

Mr. Bottomley: Will my right hon. Friend make sure that there is regular monitoring? One of the best things that the civil service can do is to show how to overcome indirect as well as direct discrimination.

Mr. Renton: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says. As he knows, the aim of the programme for action on race is to ensure that we recruit, develop and retain the best available civil servants totally regardless of race or colour. We regularly monitor the figures, which show an increase in ethnic minority staff at senior grades over the past year —from 1·5 to 1·7 per cent. I hope that that trend continues.

BILL PRESENTED

Reform of the House of Lords

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to abolish the House of Lords as presently composed and to provide for a new directly elected membership based on Parliamentary constituencies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 49.]

Gulf Crisis (Conscription)

3.33 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Have you, Mr. Speaker, had any requests from Ministers to make a statement on reports about the possibility of conscription because of the Gulf crisis? There were widespread reports in the newspapers yesterday. Have the Government made any requests along those lines?

Mr. Speaker: Over the weekend, one frequently reads speculative articles. I have not received representations from the Government on the matter. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to pursue the issue in the debates on the Adjournment motion if any fresh information becomes available.

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice Bill

(NEW CLAUSES RELATING TO CAPITAL PUNISHMENT)
Considered in Committee.

[Mr. HAROLD WALKER *in the Chair.*]

New Clause 1

PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER OF A POLICE OFFICER

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of the murder of a police officer acting in the execution of his duty shall on conviction be sentenced to death.'.—*[Mr. John Greenway.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.34 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I beg to move, That the clause be now read a Second time.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following: New clause 2—*Terrorist Murder*—

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of murder committed as, or in pursuit of, an act of terrorism shall on conviction be sentenced to death.'.

New clause 3—*Punishment for murder*—

'(1) Subject to the following sub-sections the penalty for murder shall be death.

(2) No person aged under 18 years shall suffer the death penalty.

(3) As soon as practicable following a sentence of death, a special sitting of the Court of Appeal shall be convened to consider whether the circumstances of either

(a) the commission of the offence or

(b) the offender

whether or not such circumstances were adduced in evidence at the trial, are such as would justify the substitution of a sentence of life imprisonment in place of the sentence of death.

(4) This Act shall apply to Northern Ireland.'.

New Clause 4—*Abolition of death penalty*—

'(1) In section 1 of the Treason Act 1790, for the words "hanged by the neck until she or they be severely dead" there shall be substituted the words "sentenced to imprisonment for life".

(2) In section 1 of the Treason Act 1814, for the words "hanged by the neck until such person be dead", there shall be substituted the words "sentenced to imprisonment for life".

(3) In section 2 of the Piracy Act 1837, for the words "suffer death" there shall be substituted the words "sentenced to imprisonment for life".

New clause 5—*Death penalty for murder*—

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of murder committed by means of firearms, explosives or an offensive weapon, or for the murder of a police or prison officer, shall on conviction be sentenced to death, unless the court determines that the circumstances of the case, including any extenuating circumstances, make it more appropriate for a life sentence of imprisonment.'.

New clause 6—*Punishment for murder of prison officer*—

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of the murder of a prison officer acting in the execution of his duty shall on conviction be sentenced to death.'.

New clause 7—*Punishment for other indictable offences*—

[The Chairman of Ways and Means]

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of murder committed during the preparation or commission of any other indictable offence shall on conviction be sentenced to death.'.

Mr. Greenway: I should also like to voice my support for new clause 3, standing in the name of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

Some have questioned why the House should debate this issue for the second time in this Parliament—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—and I understand why the question has been asked. The Committee is considering an important Criminal Justice Bill that goes to the heart of sentencing policy and contains a number of important new measures, which we are debating constructively in Committee and which are based on the well-known maxim that the punishment should fit the crime.

In the eyes of many outside this House, many cases of murder these days do not attract punishment that fits the crime. The public would have found it astonishing if the House had not debated this matter as part of our detailed scrutiny of the important legislative changes that we are introducing in this Bill.

It must also be acknowledged that the sentencing of murderers and terrorists continues to demand our attention and concern. Statistics suggest that, since the House last debated this matter two and a half years ago, more than 1,500 people have been unlawfully killed in the United Kingdom—not including those who, only two years ago, were blown out of the sky over Lockerbie. I am sure that the House will want to extend its sympathy at this Christmas time to the families of the Lockerbie victims and of the victims of many other recent acts of murder. Above all, we extend our sympathy to the family of our great and dear friend Ian Gow, whose brutal murder remains very much in our minds, especially today.

As the House knows, I served for almost five years as a policeman here in central London in the 1960s. I should like to recall two incidents which, if I remember correctly, took place in 1966 while I was a uniformed constable at West End Central police station. Shortly after eight o'clock one morning, I was called to a jeweller's shop in Mayfair. Two men had lain in wait for the proprietor to arrive and open the shop. They dragged him to the basement, where they savagely beat him to death before stealing what amounted to no more than a few hundred pounds' worth of silver. His battered head and body made an appalling sight, which will live in my memory for ever. Yet his murderers could not pay the ultimate price for their premeditated savagery, because the House had abolished capital punishment less than a year before. I knew then that that was a mistake, and I have always believed so since.

The second incident occurred in the early hours of a Sunday morning. A call came that there was a man brandishing a gun in Berwick street in Soho. I ran to the scene, and seeing a crowd on the street corner, I continued to approach them; but shortly before I reached them, a gun was fired. I then heard the sound of a gun being thrown on the pavement, and a man ran off. As one says when giving evidence in the police force, I gave chase and apprehended him.

The man's fingerprints were found on the gun recovered from the scene, and forensic experts later removed a bullet from the frame of the door that I had run past. The man pleaded guilty to the illegal possession of a firearm, but was acquitted of all other charges. I did not see him point the gun at me or anyone else. I could not swear on oath what I had not seen—tempting though that might have been to some officers. Other witnesses, consisting of the usual assortment of deadbeats and riff-raff who frequent Soho in the middle of the night, were, as one might expect, unreliable.

These two experiences point up what I believe to be the five crucial questions that the House must answer when considering the restoration of the death penalty. First, in abolishing the death sentence for all and any murder, have we given the armed criminal too great an advantage over the innocent victim? I think that we have, and that that is the view of the great majority of the British people.

Secondly, is society today more violent than it was in the past as a consequence, if only in part, of the abolition of the death penalty? That is also the perceived view, and later I shall suggest why I agree with that view. Thirdly, are we placing too great a burden on our police, either by asking them to face the intolerable pressures of a split-second decision when facing armed criminals or in seeking to secure the conviction of those whom they know or believe have committed serious crimes such as murder or acts of terrorism? Fourthly, has Parliament done enough to check or reduce violence by way of the sentencing powers that it has given the courts? The Bill recognises that it has not.

Finally, what more must we do or can we do to prevent miscarriages of justice which, understandably, are cited as the fundamental reason against the restoration of the death sentence? I dare say that that argument will be advanced in the debate. The new clause tabled by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) seeks to address that point by referring all convicted murderers to the Court of Appeal. If my hon. and learned Friend speaks in the debate, I am sure that he will wish to address that issue.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Although the hon. Gentleman has rightly anticipated the point and despite the other new clauses, may I ask him whether he thinks that there is something illogical in trying to bring back the death penalty, bearing in mind the fact that the Guildford Four were released after many years in prison? One almost certainly expects the Birmingham Six also to be released. In the face of those cases and in view of all the other arguments that will be deployed in the debate, how can we possibly think of bringing back capital punishment?

Mr. Greenway: I am sure that the issue raised by the hon. Gentleman will be the crux of the debate. My answer to the hon. Gentleman is in two parts. First, are we saying that the sentencing policy for offenders must be determined by whether we believe that the verdicts of juries are reliable? That is a serious matter, which must be considered.

Secondly, throughout the last eleven and a half years, the Government have repeatedly brought to Parliament measures which seek to make our criminal justice system better. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Criminal Justice Act 1988, when we last discussed this matter, are both in force. If I remember correctly, those

measures were opposed by the Opposition. We must ensure through the criminal justice system that miscarriages of justice do not take place.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Does my hon. Friend agree that the evidence is that 49 people who had committed murder did so a second time, and that if those people had been executed they would not have been able to commit murder again?

Mr. Greenway: That valid point is often made, and if my hon. Friend catches your eye, Mr. Walker, he may wish to elaborate on it.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Does my hon. Friend agree that, if capital punishment were available to the courts, it would be far less likely that bombs such as the one at Guildford, whoever planted it, would be planted in the first place? Does he futher agree that policemen would be far less likely to perjure themselves in court if they knew that the result could be a life wrongly taken by the state?

Mr. Greenway: Much as I should like to agree with my hon. Friend, I am not sure that he is correct. I hope that the Committee will agree that my experience, which I have described to the Committee, shows that there are pressures on our police force. One cannot ever forgive or sanction officers who perjure themselves, in whatever circumstances. However, as I have said, we must ensure that our criminal justice system does not allow the opportunity for that, particularly when the evidence is in the form of confessions, which are now recorded by tape or video. There are provisions on that already in the Bill, which shows that we can improve our criminal justice system, and that we are right to do so.

3.45 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): My hon. Friend has accepted that it is impossible to be certain that police officers will never perjure themselves. Does he extend that argument to saying that it will always be possible that an innocent person may be convicted and hanged? Do not the two arguments come to the same logical conclusion—that we should not reintroduce capital punishment?

Mr. Greenway: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. Parliament, the House of Commons and society have to strike a balance in protecting innocent lives. Since we last debated this matter, over 1,500 people have been unlawfully killed, even though our society is less violent than those of other countries, even within the European Community.

Society is more violent than it was 25 years ago.

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): That is not true.

Mr. Greenway: It is true. In particular, the use of firearms in crime has risen sharply—more sharply than crime generally.

A recent incident provides a clear focus of what is at stake. Police officers and armed criminals exchanged fire only two weeks ago in a peaceful Surrey village. One of the gang was left dead and another seriously wounded, but it could so easily have been the other way round, with either policemen or members of the public being killed.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend accept that, when capital punishment existed, experienced criminals invariably frisked their younger colleagues to make certain that they were not going armed? Now, arms are a tool of the trade.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend has touched on a point that I shall make in a moment.

In the incident that I mentioned, those policemen in Surrey had a split second to decide how they should react so as to protect the public and their colleagues. I pay tribute to their bravery, but we in the House of Commons, with all the time at our disposal, seem not to have the nerve to do what might have prevented those officers from being confronted as they were, and sadly so often are.

The facts speak for themselves. In the 25 years preceding the abolition of capital punishment in 1965, 22 policemen were killed in the execution of their duties. In the 25 years since abolition, 53 police officers have been killed in such circumstances. How many more would have been killed but for the skill of doctors and surgeons or the presence of mind of police marksmen?

One accepts that crime in general has increased and at a faster rate than that for murder of policemen. However, it is deeply disturbing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) said, that the nature of crime in Britain has changed. The use of firearms was noticeably absent from the culture of crime in the 1950s and early 1960s. Now, the use of firearms is commonplace. "Criminal Statistics"—this is the only other statistic to which I shall draw the attention of the Committee—shows that whereas in 1972, 539 crimes of robbery involved the use of firearms, in 1989 that had risen to 3,390—an increase of more than six times—and that they accounted for much more of the crime in Britain than they had before.

My right hon. and noble Friend Lord Waddington said at the Conservative party conference in Bournemouth in October that, in his view, the death sentence would deter some—not necessarily all—murderers. I agree with that, but I believe it to be especially true of the murderers of police officers. Parliament has provided the courts with stiffer powers of sentencing for violent criminals. There are specific measures for that purpose in the Bill. There is little appreciable difference, however, if there is any, between sentences for murder, attempted murder, firing a weapon or merely brandishing one in pursuit of a crime.

What is more, the inexorable rise in the commission of crimes by armed criminals shows that it is not unreasonable to conclude that current sentencing does not deter. We are left with a choice of concluding that there is no deterrent or accepting the inevitable argument that Parliament was wrong to abolish capital punishment altogether, and that only the death sentence can provide the deterrent which society is demanding to reverse the tide of violence of recent years.

I shall refer to a passage that appears in the report of the Royal Commission on capital punishment of 1949-53 that is often ignored by those who are in favour of abolition. In considering whether capital punishment had failed as a deterrent, the report states:

> "We can number its failures. But we cannot number its successes. No one can ever know how many people have refrained from murder because of the fear of being hanged."

There is so much more that I could say on this issue. I shall not add greatly to my remarks, because I know that many other right hon. and hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate. I shall try to set an example by being as brief as possible. As I have already said, my hon.

[Mr. Greenway]

and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) will seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with a view to explaining the thinking that lies behind new clause 3, which establishes the principle which we ought properly to adopt to avoid miscarriages of justice. The new clause goes beyond what has already been achieved.

I have referred already to the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

I commend new clause 1. It seeks to provide our policemen with the protection that they deserve. If the House rejects the clause, it will bring us nearer to the day when all our policemen may need to be armed.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): My hon. Friend is advancing a most interesting argument. Before he goes into the details of individual new clauses, will he give us his views on whether capital punishment and its reintroduction or otherwise should be decided by the nation by means of a referendum, as many of us think it might be?

Mr. Greenway: I understand the arguments that are advanced in favour of a referendum. I take the view that a referendum would tell the House only what it knows already. The results of a survey were published in the *Daily Star*. With no disrespect to that newspaper, it is one that would not normally be quoted in the House of Commons, but it is the views of 6,200 readers of the *Daily Star* who took the trouble to telephone the newspaper to tell it of their views, not the views of the newspaper, that I draw to the attention of the House. Of the 6,200, only 200 were against the death sentence. Obviously, the other 6,000 were in favour of it. If that does not tell us what a referendum would tell us, I do not know what would.

Many of us have taken part in phone-in programmes on television. I have done so on two occasions. The public telephone to give their views, and overwhelmingly they have been in favour——

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South) *rose*——

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen) *rose*——

Mr. Greenway: I have given way several times already, and I should like to bring my remarks to a conclusion. As I have said, I want others to have a chance to contribute to the debate.

Unless we accept and implement new clause 1, all our policemen may inevitably have to be armed. That is something which younger police officers feel, with reluctance, to be inevitable.

I loathe and detest all violence. It saddens me greatly that there is now so much violence in our society, whether in the real world or on our television or cinema screens. I believe instinctively, however, that sometimes the only way to defeat violence is through the use of violence. All killing is evil, but do we not on occasions have to resort to evil to defeat evil? If not, why have we sent thousands of our soldiers to the Gulf? The public believe instinctively that the availability of capital punishment must be an essential element of the fight against premeditated violent crime. Can this House for ever remain out of step with that view? By voting for new clause 1 tonight, the House would restore to the police a protection that it should never have removed.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): This is the 19th occasion since 1955 that the House has debated this topic. We debated it fully two years ago. We can all bring to the House recollections of what we have detected outside it. I believe that I have detected a feeling both in the House and in the country that our nation has some very real problems which should be dealt with in the House, but for which no time can be found, and the House might have been better occupied in debating them.

Of course I respect the right of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) to his opinion, and I do not for a moment question his sincerity. But I hope that he will forgive me if I say that none of his arguments burst upon us for the first time, and I do not believe that I can adduce any new arguments. We have both been around the course many times before.

I wish mainly to speak to new clause 4, and I shall leave it to other right hon. and hon. Members to deploy arguments on the general question. I say only that two arguments are uppermost in my mind. The first is the reflection to which the hon. Member for Ryedale adverted, but which he dismissed rather lightly—that is, that if capital punishment had been retained for the offence of murder, the guilt or innocence of the Birmingham Six would now be academic because we would have hanged them 13 years ago. We would also have hanged the Guildford Four for an offence for which we are now agreed the conviction cannot safely be allowed to stand. The hon. Gentleman replied to that with the optimistic view that perhaps our legal system would never perpetrate another mistake; that perhaps we had achieved perfection. I wish that I could believe it, but I am bound to say that I do not share his optimism.

New clause 3 makes another attempt to deal with that issue. I find it logically perplexing, because it proposes that, if the Court of Appeal finds that there is a doubt about the validity of the conviction, that would be a reason for sentencing people to life imprisonment. No doubt, when the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) speaks to his new clause, he will try to elucidate that. I am still persuaded by the argument that the legal system may perpetrate mistakes and that we would all bitterly regret it if we reinstated capital punishment. Secondly, I do not believe that it enhances respect for human life solemnly to break the neck of a human being on behalf of the state.

Turning to new clause 4, my hon. Friends and I simply want to say that, as the House is called on again to decide the question of principle—whether we think it right to regress to capital punishment—that principle should be applied consistently. I am not clear why the matter was not dealt with on earlier occasions. I do not believe that Parliament ever decided, on the merits, to retain capital punishment for treason and piracy. They are anomalies which were overlooked in earlier debates because, understandably, the House was concentrating on the offence of murder.

I am grateful to Amnesty International for reminding me that those inconsistencies remain. That has added to the debt which we all owe that organisation. I am somewhat prejudiced, because I was a founder member of Amnesty International, and for some time I was chairman of the British section. I have never invested time to better purpose.

The case for new clause 4 is simple. The question of principle, which the House will be deciding once again,

applies equally to these remaining offences. I know of no argument applicable to the penalty for murder that does not apply equally to the penalty for treason and piracy.

I should like to spend a few moments making clear what we are not seeking to do. Some observant commentators have noticed that we have not sought to abolish the death penalty for offences against the Army Acts, re-enacted in the Armed Forces Bill. They relate to offences such as mutiny in time of war. I do not believe that our nation would be any safer because we have capital punishment for mutiny in time of war, but I recognise that the arguments are different. It may be better not to complicate the debate by introducing those considerations. I shall be satisfied for the present if we can achieve consistency in time of peace.

4 pm

I should like to turn to the second thing which we are not seeking to do. We are not addressing the content of the law of treason or of piracy. I have heard a rumour, which may be entirely without foundation, that, when the Home Secretary addresses the Committee, he will argue that, because the substantive content of the law of treason is in need of revision, that should be regarded as a reason for retaining capital punishment. If he says that, it will be a curious argument—that anyone who is convicted under a law which admittedly is in a muddle should for that reason be hanged. You and I, Mr. Walker, might have thought that it would be an argument in the opposite direction.

If it helps, I agree that the substantive law of treason is much in need of revision. Much of it still stems from the Treason Act 1351, and consists of such a strangely assorted list as compassing or imagining the death of the sovereign; violating his eldest daughter, provided that she is unmarried, so it does not apply to Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, and slaying the Chancellor or the King's justices, provided that they are in their place undertaking their offices—so they are not protected by the law of treason if they are having dinner or walking the dog.

In 1977, the Law Commission published a working paper inviting comments, and it became clear, if it was not blatantly obvious already, that the law was in need of a wash and brush-up. The project did not go any further, which was not in any way the Law Commission's fault.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The argument that treason is a particularly evil thing is a complex matter to many of us. Treason means that a British subject betrays his own kind. It is said, even by the Russians in their perestroika and glasnost days, that George Blake helped to kill 45 agents. The Gulf has been mentioned today. If someone betrayed British troops, resulting in the loss of the lives of hundreds of those troops, would the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that it was terrible for the state to say, "This has been a heinous crime and that person should give up his life"? Are we really going to say that anyone who betrays other people can cause the death of those people without that costing his life?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Walker. I hesitate to interrupt my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), but the Committee will know that, at the end of Question Time, I asked Mr. Speaker whether he had had any request from the Government to make a statement about the introduction of conscription. He replied that he had received no such request. We now know that a written question gives a substantive answer, reintroducing the principle of conscription to this country——

The Chairman: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are in Committee, and that this is not a matter for the Committee.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Walker. My point of order is very simple. Surely such an important decision should be revealed to the House in an oral answer or a statement. To introduce the principle of conscription in a written answer is absolutely unacceptable——

The Chairman: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern but I am sure that he will recognise that, because we are in Committee, I cannot deal with this matter.

Mr. Dalyell: Further to the point of order, Mr. Walker. Surely, even if the House is in Committee when something as important as this happens and when the House is treated in this way, there must be a way in which we can ask for a Minister to come to the Dispatch Box and make a statement.

The Chairman: A Minister cannot come to the House and make a statement on such matters while we are in Committee. The hon. Gentleman will doubtless use his experience and ingenuity to seek an early opportunity to raise the matter on a more appropriate occasion.

Mr. Archer: The point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was on an important matter, but I think that it was addressed to you, Mr. Walker, rather than to me, so I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I return to my argument.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) asked me to respond to the suggestion that treason can be a terrible offence. I agree——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Not "can be"; it is.

Mr. Archer: It depends on all the circumstances.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Treason is a terrible offence.

Mr. Archer: That depends on what someone has done. If it helps the hon. Gentleman, I readily agree that treason can be a terrible offence—so, I believe, can murder—but that is not what we are debating today. I do not believe that our country would be any safer if we retained capital punishment for the offence of treason—any more than individuals would be safer if we reintroduced capital punishment for the offence of murder.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Archer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will let me proceed. He will no doubt have the opportunity to develop his argument in due course in a speech of his own.

I was about to make a confession, Mr. Walker. Purely inadvertently, I failed to include in the new clause a reference to the Treason Act 1775, dealing with compassing the death of the sovereign. The fault is entirely mine. I noticed it myself and I understand that the Home Secretary's advisers noticed it subsequently. But I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would not consider that a reason to deprive the House of the right to make a decision

[Mr. Archer]

on principle. Clearly, any defect for which I am responsible can be rectified at a subsequent stage in the consideration of the Bill.

Mr. Wilshire: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman is making a confession and offering the House an apology, may I say that there is only one issue on which I have disagreed with him so far? He keeps referring to the list of hon. Members who have signed the amendment as "we", and he makes it sound as though they are all Labour Members. Does he accept that many Conservative Members, myself included, would have liked to sign the amendment, and fully support the arguments that he is advancing?

Mr. Archer: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, especially as he is a fellow Methodist. I confess that I did not specifically invite him to sign the amendment, but it would certainly have pleased me had I seen his name on the list of those who did.

If the offence of treason were abolished, the people to whom I have referred—members of the royal family, the Chancellor and the judiciary—would still be protected by the ordinary law relating to murder and other violent offences. Clearly, if anyone offered violence to a member of the royal family or a judge, they would be prosecuted under provisions quite different from those of the 1351 Act. Our criminal law is in need of some reform, but I do not believe that we have been reduced to that.

I agree that there is a need to review the position relating to the substantive law of treason. But the new clause is not about the substantive law; it is about the penalties. The statutes which the new clause proposes to repeal were intended to civilise the penalties. The Treason Act 1770 was not concerned with the substantive law. It provided that a woman convicted of treason should be hanged instead of being burned. The Treason Act 1814 extended the same leniency to men by providing that a penalty of hanging should be substituted for the penalty of disembowelling.

If the Secretary of State promises to review the law on treason, many Opposition members would say, "Not before time." However, that relates to the substantive law and not to the penalty. We believe that this debate is about penalties and that the arguments which persuaded the House two years ago, and which will no doubt be deployed again today, apply with equal force to the offences of treason and piracy.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Is this debate solely about penalties? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman not aware that one cannot open a newspaper on any day of the week without seeing accounts of horrific crimes or of murders of women and children? The statistics point clearly to a decline in society and a growth in violence. What has the right hon. and learned Gentleman to say about that?

Mr. Archer: If I understood the relevance of the right hon. Gentleman's question to what I was saying, I would endeavour to answer him. Horrific crimes are committed and some of us have complained that the Government should be doing more about them. Many things could be done to reduce the number of horrific crimes, but, as I was saying, this debate is about penalties.

If the rumour that the Secretary of State is proposing to use the argument that I have described transpires to be justified, I would be disappointed, because that would not be characteristic of him. It might conceivably be characteristic of the Home Office: it would not be the first time that we have heard the argument from the Home Office that, if a thing is worth doing, it is worth delaying until we are all dead. however, I hope that we do not hear that from the Secretary of State.

The last person to be executed for treason was William Joyce, known affectionately as Lord Haw-Haw, immediately after the second world war. Capital punishment for piracy is dealt with under the Piracy Act 1837 and the last person to be executed for piracy was executed in the 19th century.

So some people may ask whether it matters greatly that we retain capital punishment on the statute book if it is not likely to be used. I believe that it matters for two reasons. First, what the state prescribes about this is a test of our civilisation. If we have a death penalty on the statute book, we will be virtually the only democracy in western Europe to have one, and we will be resisting the tide of civilisation.

Secondly, under the sixth protocol to the European convention on human rights, the member states of the Council of Europe undertake to abolish the death penalty. That protocol has not even been signed, much less ratified, by the United Kingdom. Apart from the United Kingdom, only Cyprus, Ireland—I understand why in Ireland's case—Malta and Turkey have not signed the protocol.

I am sure that the Foreign Secretary would be relieved if he could inform the Community that the United Kingdom was no longer on that list. If the Foreign Secretary cannot remove our name from that list, I hope that the Home Secretary will explain that our name is there not because Parliament is in favour of capital punishment, but because he advised the House not to make up its mind on the issue.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the sanctity of human life should apply in particular to innocent human life, such as those that are destroyed by the million by abortion?

Mr. Archer: Certainly the sanctity of human life applies to innocent human life, including, for example, the Guildford Four, as my hon. Friends have said. I happen to believe that it applies to all human life. One of the most important ways in which we can establish that, as a community, we condemn the taking of life, is to abstain from doing it ourselves.

4.15 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned that Ireland is one of the countries that still have capital punishment on their statute book for the murder of policemen. As the principle applies just as much to the Irish position as to what we are debating, is this not an ideal opportunity to ask the Irish Government also to remove capital punishment from its statute book, so that such offensive legislation would not exist either here or anywhere in Ireland? I take the opportunity of publicly asking the Irish Government to do that, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will join me in doing so.

Mr. Archer: The hon. Gentleman is fully entitled to make that point. If it helps him, not for the first time, I

would join him in representations that he addresses to the Government of the Irish Republic. But I would prefer for the moment not to introduce a further complication into the debate. I want to keep the argument simple.

Perhaps I have been doing the Home Secretary a total injustice, and he does not intend to introduce that rather spurious argument at all.

It remains for me to give one other explanation. I have been asked why I am seeking to replace capital punishment with a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment. It has been pointed out, as I already knew, that many senior judges believe that judges should have some discretion in relation to that sentence. Obviously, some cases fully merit life imprisonment, and no doubt that is what would be decided in that event. Some cases may be better disposed of by a determinate sentence which relates to the seriousness of the offence. In some cases, it might be better if a judge had a discretion to make a hospital order under the Mental Health Act 1984. I am aware of the debate on that matter and of the helpful discussion in the book entitled "Responses to Crime" by a former Conservative Home Office Minister, Lord Windelsham. I spare the Home Secretary that issue, because this is not the occasion for the House to embark on that debate.

We are seeking to ensure consistency in the penalties that apply to the law of murder and which, by the end of the debate, will have been considered by the Committee. If, one day, Parliament decides to give a discretion to judges, that will be another matter for another day.

I apologise for the length of time that I have taken, but I have had several interruptions. Meanwhile, I shall be content if today the House rectifies what I believe is simply an oversight and takes a decision that it would have taken on previous occasions if its attention had been called to the matter, applies the same arguments to these offences as persuade the House in relation to capital punishment generally, and if we place the United Kingdom squarely among the company of civilised nations.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I shall deal later with the points that have been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer).

I wish to state at the outset of this debate that I yield to no one in my detestation of violent crime. When there are tears to be shed, they should be shed for the innocent victim, not the guilty perpetrator, so I want to assure the House that a determination to protect the innocent is my overriding concern as Home Secretary.

The arguments that I shall advance in this debate are arguments about the efficacy of capital punishment. Of course there is ample room for passion in these debates, but I want to put forward a case based upon reason and fact.

I do not underestimate the strong feelings held by the supporters on the two sides in this debate. On one side, many argue—some interventions have demonstrated the passion with which the view is felt—that it is possible to contain the innate violent tendencies in society and protect the innocent only if the state is empowerd to take the life of a murderer. Some crimes are so repulsive to society, displaying such depths of cruelty and inhumanity, that it is only right for society to exact the ultimate penalty. Indeed, the ultimate penalty is a duty to be exercised by society. The argument is that, to protect life, one must be prepared to take life.

On the other side, there are those who believe, either from deep religious or moral convictions; that it is wrong for the state to take away the life of anyone; that no circumstances can justify the deliberate and elaborate process that ends on the gallows. They feel passionately that such a brutal reaction to the very crime of brutality defeats its object by dehumanising society. Although not expressed in exactly those words, those views were expressed with feeling a few moments ago by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). These views are deeply held, and I respect them; but I recognise that they are irreconcilable.

A tradition has developed during these debates that the Home Secretary should offer the House some analysis of the background to the factors which hon. Members will wish to take into account, and then say something about his personal views. I intend to follow that tradition.

Since capital punishment was abolished for murder in November 1965, the House has returned to this matter on at least 12 occasions. There have been 22 votes on this issue, with majorities against restoring capital punishment varying from 170 to 81. Nonetheless, the House wishes to return to this subject, since it concerns many hon. Members and it also concerns the general public, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said in his very good speech.

There is a long history of parliamentary interest in and concern about the death penalty. In the early 19th century, over 200 offences were punishable by death, and there was a prolonged campaign to confine the death penalty to only the most serious offences. By 1861, the death penalty was available only for high treason, murder, piracy with violence, and the destruction of public arsenals and dockyards. Today it remains available for treason, piracy with violence, and for some treasonable and mutinous offences under the Armed Forces Act 1971.

Since 1861, treason apart, there have been no executions except for murder. Public executions came to an end in 1868 as a result of a campaign whose supporters included Thackeray, Dickens and Thomas Love Peacock. Only in 1868 was the death sentence abolished for children under 16, and the age limit was raised to 18 in 1933.

Since the war, the Homicide Act 1957 restricted the death penalty to certain categories of murder. This proved unsatisfactory in practice. Some heinous crimes escaped the death penalty; others, arguably less heinous, became liable to the death penalty if a firearm was used rather than a knife. I am sure that many hon. Members will recall the Ruth Ellis case. Finally, Sydney Silverman's private Member's Bill abolishing the death penalty for murder became law in 1965, and the House reaffirmed the position in 1970. So much for the history.

Despite the British parliamentary interest in this issue, I have to say that similar debates do not seem to occur elsewhere in western Europe. There is no campaign to restore the death penalty in other western European countries. Although most of them have higher homicide rates and higher records of violent crime than we do, there is no campaign to restore the death penalty. The death penalty remains available in Albania, Bulgaria, Russia, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Japan, the majority of states in America and also South Africa—where it is suspended —Singapore and south America.

[Mr. Kenneth Baker]

I turn now to the incidence of homicide. In England and Wales in the past 10 years, some 500 to 650 offences have initially been recorded as homicide by the police each year. This, of course, includes the offences of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. In the past 10 years, the number of people convicted of murder has varied between 130 and 230 a year. The number of homicides has been increasing in the last 30 years or so. In the 10 years from 1976 to 1985, the average number of homicides has been 580; in the 10 years before that—from 1966 to 1975—the average was 450 per year, and in the 10 years from 1956 to 1965, the average was 294.

However, I noted as I looked at those figures that the number of offences initially recorded as homicide per 100,000 of the population was almost the same in 1989 as it was in 1857. The rate then was 1·26, and the rate for 1989 was 1·25. The highest rate of homicides was 1·96, in 1865. But there was a long period of 70 years, from 1902 to 1974, when the homicide rate was less than one for every 100,000 of the population. Since then, the rate has varied between 1·0 and 1·3, although it fell to just below one in 1977.

In the United States the rate is much higher—over eight for every 100,000 of population. Yet the death penalty is available in 37 states in America. It is interesting to consider the American experience in the past 20 years. In 1977, the first execution took place after a gap of 10 years. Since then, there have been 120 executions in America up to the end of last year. I believe that an execution took place last week, but it may have been postponed until this week. In 1977, the homicide rate in the United States was 8·8; in 1980—three years after the resumption of the death penalty—it had risen to over 10; but by 1986, it had fallen to 8·6, which was roughly its previous level.

Numerous studies have shown that there seems to be no relationship between changes in the homicide rate and the availability of the death penalty. For example, from 1980 to 1985, the homicide rate fell by 20 per cent. in Georgia and Florida which both had the death penalty, but it fell by 26 per cent. in New York, which did not have the death penalty.

The conclusion reached by a distinguished British academic, Professor Roger Hood, in his report for the United Nations "The Death Penalty: a Worldwide Perspective" is that different methods of study

"failed to support the hypothesis that the death penalty is marginally a more effective deterrent than lengthy imprisonment".

In the Scottish parlance, the effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent is "not proven".

So one cannot draw an absolute conclusion that the death penalty is a deterrent. This is a point on which I know that hon. Members will wish to exercise their own judgment, but there is no evidence from other criminal jurisdictions that the existence of the death penalty reduces murders or other crimes of violence.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend. He has gone through the statistics from his Department and drawn on the views of other analysts. Can he explain to the House why, in the 20 years following the second world war—that is to say, from 1945 to 1964, the year in which the death penalty was abolished—the number of killings made known, according to his own table of figures, fell from over 300 to about 296? Almost from the day of abolition, the number of killings rose sharply and the number of crimes involving the use of firearms increased dramatically. He may quote figures to show that there is no evidence that the death penalty deters crime but will he accept that the figures for Britain at least seem to be clear, precise and convincing?

Mr. Baker: I have not sought to disguise those figures from the House or from my hon. Friend. With respect, I mentioned the increases in the rates of homicide over the past three decades. I told the House that the rates had increased.

Mr. John Greenway *indicated assent.*

Mr. Baker: I see my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) nodding. The reasons for the increase are indeed complex. It is difficult to conclude from all the evidence available that the increase is associated with the suspension of the death sentence for most crimes in 1957 and its abolition in 1965.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: If I may finish this passage, I shall give way to my hon. Friend. I shall deal later with the point about firearms referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor).

Another factor relevant to the debate is the method of execution. We cannot seriously discuss the restoration of the death penalty unless we are prepared to consider how it should be carried out. Lethal injection is the preferred method in the United States. The procedure is similar to a general anaesthetic, but the drugs are injected in fatal quantities. It is considered to be the most humane method —less likely to involve severe pain. But there can be difficulties in administering the drugs. In Texas, one prisoner took at least 10 minutes to die. There has been an intense debate in the medical profession about the ethics of doctors using their medical knowledge in the administration of death. In Florida, the doctors have refused to administer the fatal injections.

Hanging is not much favoured in America, although it involves fewer preliminaries than electrocution or lethal gas. One state in America still has execution by shooting. The speed and painlessness of death is not thought to differ much between the three methods, apart from shooting. But hanging—although it requires more skill from the executioner—is simpler and may be quicker. It used to take less than 30 seconds between the executioner entering the condemned cell and pulling the lever. But with all three methods, there have been difficulties which have considerably prolongued the condemned person's death.

Mr. Sayeed: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, except for the few intent on self-immolation, the death penalty will not encourage murder, and that, on balance, common sense tells us that it is likely to discourage murder?

Mr. Baker: I am coming to the question of deterrence. I take my hon. Friend's point that many people feel that the relationship is one of common sense. However, where a country has restored the death penalty, the evidence is inconclusive. One cannot say that, as a result of America restoring or implementing the death penalty from 1977, there has been a significant reduction in crimes of violence in any of the states in which it has operated.

4.30 pm

Mr. Norman Tebbit (Chingford): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the statistics, all of which are open to varying interpretations, will he agree that his Department has recently given me one statistic, the interpretation of which cannot be disputed, and that is that, since the abolition of the death penalty, almost 60 innocent people have died at the hands of killers who have been released from prison?

Mr. Baker: In reply to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]*—sorry, my right hon. Friend; all former chairmen of the Conservative party have an umbilical cord binding us—offences of homicide committed by those who had previously been convicted of a murder are rare. We have known of only nine cases. I state that because other figures have been circulated dealing with people convicted of murder after the abolition of capital punishment in 1965 who have later killed again. On the information available to us, we judge that six out of those nine and perhaps more would not have been treated as capital murders under the Homicide Act 1967. That is the key point. Had those offences occurred before abolition, in only a handful of cases, at most three, is it likely that life would have been saved by the execution of the murderer.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: I have given way, and I shall give way again. I shall give way to my hon. and learned Friend when I come to deal with the new clause which stands in his name. If I may, I shall proceed and answer the questions raised.

Mr. Lawrence *rose*——

Mr. Baker: All right, I am happy to give way to my hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Lawrence: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, and I do not want to impede his speech. Is it not a fact that, in 11 out of the 12 states in the United States where capital punishment has been restored and executions have been carried out, there has been a reduction in the murder rate?

Mr. Baker: Yes, but there has also been a reduction in the murder rate in states which have not introduced the death penalty. I am happy to make available to my hon. and learned Friend all the reports which flood into the Home Office on the analysis of what has happened in America since 1977. I am happy again to give way to my hon. and learned Friend when we reach his new clause.

I turn now to the new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Rydale, asking that the death penalty should apply to someone who is convicted of murdering a police officer. Connected to that is the clause making it also available for the murder of a prison officer.

May I make it absolutely clear that we all deplore violence directed against the police? The murder of a police officer is a particularly heinous crime. We all recognise that the work of police officers makes them particularly vulnerable. That is why the Government have always been determined that the police should be adequately protected in carrying out their vital task of preventing crime and protecting all of us.

The Court of Appeal has made it clear that the normal sentence for any assault on a police officer involving the deliberate use of force, even where it has not been severe, will be imprisonment.

The greatest risk to the police is from firearms. However, in the past 10 years, the proportion of all notifiable offences involving firearms has remained at about 0·3 per cent. We have introduced new laws to tighten up the control of firearms, offensive weapons and knives. The Firearms Act 1988 banned private ownership of some of the most lethal guns. We hope that that has gone some way to making the streets safer for the police and the public.

I can assure the House that I shall continue my predecessor's policy of requiring those responsible for the worst categories of murder, including those who kill police officers, to serve at least 20 years in prison. I must emphasise that 20 years is the minimum; many murderers will serve longer. For some, life will mean life. I believe that the length of the sentence is critical. There are 2,300 prisoners serving life sentences for murder. Some 175 murderers have served 15 years or longer, and 54 have served more than 20 years. Of that 54, some 40 have served between 20 and 25 years, nine have served between 25 and 30 years and five have served more than 30 years. In the decision whether to release such murderers, the overriding consideration must always be the risk to the public. In reaching such a decision I must take account of the considered advice of the Parole Board, the trial judge and the Lord Chief Justice.

In considering the proposal, it is also important to consider the views of those most closely involved. The Police Federation believes that capital punishment should be restored for the crime of murder—I believe that hon. Members have received a letter from the federation. In recent weeks, I have spoken to many police officers and I have found that younger officers in particular are not in favour of the death penalty. I do not believe, however, that that in any way reduces the strength of the Police Federation's view. There are differing opinions among chief officers and the Association of Chief Political Officers *[Interruption.]*—I meant the Association of Chief Police Officers—which has no collective view. I understand that the Police Superintendents Association is more or less evenly divided.

Similarly, we rely on prison officers to protect the public from those in custody. Prison officers were also covered by Leon Brittan's statement about the worst kinds of murder. The Prison Officers Association has long supported capital punishment as a discretionary penalty. The Prison Governors Association has not taken a collective view, but governors have opposed it in the past. They have been especially concerned about the effect on the staff who had custody of the condemned prisoner.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) spoke about deterrence. For me, the key argument at the end of the day is whether capital punishment is an effective deterrent. The restorers have no doubt about this. They claim that natural common sense would appear to make it so, but there is considerable doubt. In well over 70 per cent. of murders, the victim and the murderer are known to each other. Some 62 per cent. of all female victims are either related to or the spouse or lover of their murderer. Many of those victims die as a result of sudden, uncontrolled anger by their killers. I think one can legitimately doubt whether the existence of the capital sentence would have any bearing upon such actions.

I accept, however, that, for some murders, and by far the greatest majority of crimes, there must be effective and strong deterrents. No one should underestimate the effect

[Mr. Baker]

of a long prison sentence. If anyone doubts that, let them visit a prison. In the three weeks that I have been Home Secretary, I have so far visited three prisons, and I will be visiting another one this week. I must tell the Committee that all prisons are grim, and some prisons are much grimer than others. To deprive someone of their liberty for 20, 30, 40 years, or even the whole of their life, will in some cases be fully justified, but let no one underestimate the severity which that punishment represents.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Lord Scarman, one of the most eminent lawyers in the country, is an arch opponent of capital punishment. This morning, on radio, he conceded that, for a certain number of murders, capital punishment would be a deterrent. Are those lives not worth saving?

Mr. Baker: I am as concerned as my hon. Friend to ensure that the lives not only of police officers but of everyone are protected as well as possible in our country. I imagine that Lord Scarman—I did not hear the report—had in mind those murders involving firearms. As I said, we have considerably tightened the laws in that sector. In 1988, the Criminal Justice Act made carrying a firearm in the commission of a crime punishable by life.

New clause 2 proposes the death penalty for murder committed in the pursuit of terrorism. I do not know whether it will be called tonight, but nonetheless I think I should deal with the argument behind it, since many Members feel very strongly about this. The Government are utterly determined to tackle the crimes which are committed in the name of terrorism. We can never tolerate this evil. The murder of Ian Gow left me, as it did many others, utterly shocked, deeply distressed and very angry. It is a quite understandable reaction to want to see the perpetrators hanged.

However, nearly everybody who has had direct responsibility for dealing with terrorism has the gravest misgivings about the reintroduction of the death penalty. They have been concerned about the desire for martyrdom by terrorists. Those who have been prepared to starve themselves to death are not likely to have any fear of the gallows. They have also been concerned that, quite callously, terrorists would be prepared to use young people under the age of 18 in their dastardly crimes.

Nor can we overlook the fact of the possibility of hostages being taken later while the execution is awaited and society being subjected to blackmail. The Government could never yield to that sort of blackmail—the sentence would have to be carried out—but one has to recognise that the result of reintroducing the death penalty could be that more innocent lives may be put at risk.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): My right hon. Friend must exclude from his list of those who he claims oppose the reintroduction of the death penalty, those who are in the front line in the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland—the Police Federation of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Baker: I shall come on to Northern Ireland in a moment.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Home Secretary agree that we have been most unsuccessful in catching the perpetrators of terrorism, no doubt partly due to the outrage felt at the time and the pressure on the authorities to get results quickly? We now know that, in 1974 alone, at least 10 innocent people would have hanged.

Mr. Baker: I do not intend to deal with particular cases, but I disagree with the basic proposition with which the hon. Gentleman began his intervention.

However, my real objection to singling out terrorism in this way is that it recognises terrorism as a special crime to be punished in a special way. I want to make it clear that, when we are fighting terrorism, we are not engaged in a political war: we are engaged in a war against criminality by evil and callous men and women. That point is recognised across the world. Terrorism, however terrible, is a criminal act. Those who perpetrate it must be treated as common criminals.

Today's debate is concerned mainly with England and Wales. But we need to keep in mind that the largest proportion of terrorist murders in the United Kingdom is committed in Northern Ireland. The same is true of the proportion of murders of policemen.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to say that it is his view that the imposition of capital punishment in Northern Ireland would make the defeat of terrorism in the Province more difficult. He would draw particular attention to the following dangers of restoration of the death penalty. It would create martyrs; it would make the special legal processes which exist in Northern Ireland for the purposes of dealing with terrorism more difficult to operate; and it would damage the prospects for the trust between the security forces and the community, which is essential if information about terrorist activity is to be collected and acted upon.

I understand that the Chief Constable and the most senior officers of the RUC, like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, are of the view that the reintroduction of capital punishment would make the task of the police in Northern Ireland more difficult in combating terrorism. The prison authorities in Northern Ireland consider that it would be a setback to their successful policy of denying prisoners and their supporters any issue upon which to mount a campaign.

4.45 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is it not a fact that the weapon in the armoury of the IRA is capital punishment? Is it not a fact that in that way, the IRA have punished people throughout Northern Ireland—Protestants, Roman Catholics, and members of the security forces and their families? Does not the Home Secretary agree that there is no way to deal with this matter but the method used in the other part of Ireland when there was similar trouble there and a rigorous campaign of capital punishment was introduced?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman has dealt with such matters in a more intimate way than many other hon. Members over the years, but the advice that I have relayed to the House, given by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, senior RUC officers and the prison services, does not accord with his views. They consider that it would not help them to deal with the utterly vile crimes. I totally agree with the hon. Gentleman in his

condemnation of those who perpetrate such crimes and of the way that they have tried to destroy society in Northern Ireland during the past 20 or 30 years.

Mr. Winnick: As the Home Secretary may know, my loathing of terrorism is second to none; but is there not a wider issue involved? Is it not a fact that, although they would never admit it, the Provisional IRA would like the death penalty to be applied simply because the execution of terrorists would invoke sympathy in the United States and Ireland? In the Republic of Ireland, Provisional Sinn Fein has been unable to get more than 2 per cent. of the vote in general elections, but reaction to the hunger strikers demonstrates that execution would invoke the sympathy on which the IRA relies for its sordid and murderous ends.

Mr. Baker: I do not think there is any evidence that the IRA would welcome the return of the death sentence. However, I am absolutely certain that, if it existed, the IRA would do everything it could to exploit it.

For all these reasons, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not believe that capital punishment should be made available in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mallon: I welcome the information that the Home Secretary has given in relation to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Chief Constable and the Army authorities, because it concurs with the view I hold, having had discussions with them. Does the Home Secretary agree that the one thing that the Provisional IRA cannot deal with is normality, both in law and society, and that to create an abnormal place in law in relation to capital punishment for them could be successfully used by the IRA for propaganda purposes?

Mr. Baker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, but many of the victims of terrorism would certainly say that the terrorists are creating a state of abnormality by the acts that they perpetrate against society in Northern Ireland.

The amendment standing in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West would, as he said, make life imprisonment the mandatory sentence for treason and for piracy with violence. It would mean that the death penalty would still remain for some offences under the Armed Forces Act of 1971. I am advised that the amendments as they stand are defective in that they do not cover one of the statutes relating to treason, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman invited me to rest my opposition to his amendment on the fact that it is defective, but I shall not do so. Should the House pass the motion tonight, it would be the responsibility of the Government to remove the defect of the amendment.

I have some sympathy with the view that the death penalty should be abolished for piracy, especially as there is some doubt about the circumstances in which it would apply. Life imprisonment is the maximum penalty for the equivalent offence of hijacking an aircraft. However, that is a somewhat academic question, since the last execution for piracy was in 1830.

The question relating to the penalty for treason is, however, more complex. In 1977, the Law Commission's working paper on treason, sedition and allied offences pointed out that, apart from some cases in wartime, there had been no modern instance of prosecution in English courts for the offence of treason. In practical terms, therefore, the law of treason is important only in time of war.

The paper concluded that the present statutes dealing with treason and treason felony should be repealed and that there should be an offence of treason applicable only during the existence of a state of war. The deficiencies were recognised during the last war through the passing of a special Act in 1940.

Clearly, what is needed is a complete revision of the law relating to treason and the appropriate penalties that would attach to any new provision. It would therefore be inappropriate at this stage to amend solely the penalty without consideration of the offence giving rise to that penalty. I have discussed that with the Lord Chancellor, who considers that it would be appropriate for the Law Commission to continue its examination of this law in the context of its work on the codification of the criminal law. This will allow Parliament in due course to consider the complex matters surrounding the law of treason. Merely to amend the present law by substituting a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment would give the wholly erroneous impression that, apart from that change, Parliament was content with it.

Mr. Archer: So it is the right hon. Gentleman's argument, as I anticipated, that, because the statutes should be repealed, we should retain the death penalty for them—on the face of it, a curious argument. In any event, will he seize this opportunity to say that, since the working paper of the Law Commission was issued in 1977, he will at least ask it to press on with the matter and, once it has reported, give us an early opportunity to debate it?

Mr. Baker: I have great sympathy with that point of view, but the right hon. and learned Gentleman must recognise that his new clause raises complex issues. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) asked the right hon. and learned Gentleman several questions which—I do not want to be offensive to him—he did not answer convincingly. In any case, the new clause raises important matters which, as a former Law Officer, the right hon. and learned Gentleman will appreciate.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister referred rather curiously to the work of the Law Commission on codification. The Law Commission has produced a Bill codifying English and Welsh criminal law and it has been available to the Government for some years. What sort of time does the right hon. Gentleman have in mind for the completion of the work to which he has referred?

Mr. Baker: I appreciate that it would be sensible to draw this matter to a relatively speedy conclusion. I am not a lawyer, so I do not know what "speedy" means in legal terms, but it is clear that the law should be revised fundamentally. I shall draw what the hon. Gentleman has said to the attention of the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I am anxious to get the Home Secretary's view on this clear. He told my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) that his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) had asked my right hon. and learned Friend questions that he had not answered convincingly. The

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question asked by the hon. Member for Selly Oak was: is not treason such an horrendous crime that a capital sentence is appropriate for it? I hope that the Home Secretary is not using that argument in defence of his position. I hope that he will make it clear that he does not share that view, even though he chose to quote it for some reason.

Mr. Baker: That is a fair point, but my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak raised practical considerations about what constitutes treason in time of war and in time of peace. The House should have time to reflect on that, rather than coming to a snatched decision over the course of a prolonged weekend.

Mr. Dicks: Should not the same logic also apply to terrorist activities? My right hon. Friend cannot have it both ways to suit his convenience: if a terrorist has killed 30 or 40 people and it is wrong to hang him, it must by definition also be wrong to hang a man for treason. I am in favour of capital punishment. Terrorists should be hanged for murder, and so should those who commit treason.

Mr. Baker: The two matters are different; I have already dealt with terrorism. I am fully aware of my hon. Friend's opinion on these matters. He has forcefully expressed them over the years, and he will continue to do so. Such arguments as I have adduced today my hon. Friend will not accept, I fear, but I ask him to consider that terrorism and treason are very different.

I emphasise that there is a free vote on the new clause but that it would be much more sensible to leave the penalty as it is until wider consideration of the law of treason is completed.

Mr. Wilshire: My right hon. Friend suggests that it is right to leave well alone until he has had a chance to deal with this matter. Will he accept that some of us, if we are to agree with his argument, will have to vote against the abolition of the death penalty? We accept that the law needs thorough revision but we will find it impossible to give it that revision tonight, so we shall have to vote for the new clause if it is put to the vote.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right. That is why we have always had free votes on these matters. I do not suggest that he should vote one way or the other. I have placed before the House certain considerations which it is my duty as Home Secretary to place before it. If my hon. Friend does not want to follow that advice, that is up to him, but I shall vote against the new clause for the reasons that I have set out.

The new clause tabled by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is important and my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale referred to it. It is the nub of the debate today. I do not know whether my hon. and learned Friend will catch your eye later, Mr. Walker, but I spoke in his constituency on Friday night —in his support, I hasten to add—and he was then able to tell me the gist of his arguments——

Mr. Lawrence: My right hon. Friend spoke very well.

Mr. Baker: I thank my hon. and learned Friend—he was very good, too.

The effect of the new clause would be that juries would continue to decide whether a defendant would be convicted of murder. Death would be the mandatory sentence for defendants of 18 or over, but, as soon as practical after a sentence of death, there should be a special sitting of the Court of Appeal to consider whether the circumstances of the offence or of the offender would justify the substitution of a sentence of life imprisonment for the sentence of death.

This is an important idea, which I have no doubt will be the focus of today's debate. It makes a proposal which the House has not considered before. My hon. and learned Friend proposes that there should be no distinction between different types of murder at trial. Neither the jury nor the trial judge should be asked to differentiate between different types of murder or to decide between different penalties. The House will recall that the Homicide Act 1957 was found to be most unsatisfactory because it sought in practice to do exactly that—to draw distinctions between different types of murder.

Such distinctions run into difficult problems in logic or in practice. It is extremely difficult to distinguish between different categories of murder. That has been the greatest weakness of the case of those who have wanted the restoration of capital punishment since 1965. The degree of heinousness of a crime can be considered only in the unique circumstances of each offence. There are difficulties in trying to categorise according to the status of the victim, the weapon used or the relationship of the offender to the victim. Many would say that it is just as heinous of someone to poison his wife or mistress over a long period as it is to shoot someone in the furtherance of crime—I notice my hon. and learned Friend nodding at that. However, he recognises that there is in practice a wide variation in the culpability of offenders and in the seriousness of different murders.

We may think of examples—the murder of a child in gruesome circumstances, or multiple murders—and contrast them with someone who kills after suffering years of violence and abuse from another member of the family, or with someone else who feels it right to put an end to the life of a much loved relative who is suffering acute pain in terminal illness. Society recognises that there are differences and that not all these cases would permit a sentence of death.

The position of juries, given mandatory death sentences for all charges of murder, might change. Faced with such mandatory sentences, we would or could experience a marked reluctance on their part to convict the accused——

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Would.

Mr. Baker: Perhaps, but there is an area of doubt. There would also be an increased demand for the level of proof brought by the prosecution to be utterly convincing.

The new clause also raises the question whether a majority verdict would be appropriate for the death sentence. We could well end up not only with more acquittals but with fewer murderers being brought to trial. I am sure that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton will deal with that point if he catches the Chair's eye.

Secondly, the new clause would place on the Court of Appeal the onerous responsibility of deciding whether the death sentence should stand. The responsibility would be placed not on the single judge but on the Court of Appeal.

This is such a major change that I thought it right to consult the Lord Chief Justice, as one of my predecessors had done in a previous debate. He told me that he continues to take the view that a death sentence should be imposed not by the judges, whether at the trial or on appeal, but by Parliament. He has also authorised me to point out that, under this arrangement, the Court of Appeal would not have heard the evidence or seen the defendant or the witnesses, and would accordingly usually being a worse position than the trial judge to make the decision that the new clause would require. The House will want to weigh the advice of the Lord Chief Justice carefully.

This process would also add a further stage in the appeal process, because another court could still be asked to consider whether the verdict itself was sound. Presumably there would also be an appeal from the sentence decision of the Court of Appeal. In the 19th century, the gap between trial and execution could be very short, in some cases as short as a week. In 1950, the average period between sentence and execution in England and Wales was about five weeks. In some cases where there was an appeal, it rose to more than six weeks.

5 pm

But this, of course, is nothing like as long as the time in the United States, where condemned persons spend, on average, nearly eight years awaiting execution or reprieve. Even if we avoided delays of that length, there is no doubt that all opportunities for appeal and delay would be exploited. They might include attempts to get the issue considered by the European Court of Human Rights. During that period, media interest in the convicted prisoner, his family and friends would increase, and the family and friends of the victim might well be drawn into that. The public's attention would more and more focus on the fate and demeanour of the murderer and less and less on the poor victim. One can well imagine the field day that the media would have in such a situation, and I have little doubt that much of it would be in favour of the murderer rather than the victim.

The Committee will wish to consider very carefully the possibility of a miscarriage of justice. Any criminal justice system makes mistakes. We must try to minimise the risk of error, but all experience in this country and abroad shows that mistakes can happen. The Committee will not expect me to comment on particular cases. I say only that it is very hard for someone to serve years in prison on the basis of a conviction that is subsequently found to be unsafe. Release from imprisonment and financial compensation cannot really make amends for the lost years, but even those are better than a posthumous free pardon.

I recognise that murderers care nothing about the innocence of their victims, but one must not compare the responsibility of the state as the deliberate instrument of justice with the evil-intentioned actions of criminals. Those who favour the reintroduction of capital punishment must address this issue. The possibility of an innocent person being hanged by mistake canot be dismissed with a shrug. If the concept of British justice is to mean anything, we must retain the possibility of rectifying a mistaken verdict. Capital punishment denies that redress. There is no appeal from the grave.

Each of us has to make up his or her own mind on this issue. There will, of course, be a free vote on each new clause. I do not take it for granted that every hon. Member has set and unchangeable views on this matter. I have found in my time in Parliament that colleagues have changed their views as new circumstances have arisen. I have tried to set out various considerations that provide grounds for hon. Members to re-examine their views.

We all agree that murder is the worst of all crimes, because it takes away that most precious gift, the life of another human being. But we should remember that murder accounts for just one tenth of 1 per cent. of violent crimes, and less than one hundredth of 1 per cent. of all recorded crimes. One of the critical issues in the debate is whether capital punishment is a deterrent, and I have shown that the evidence on this is far from conclusive. It does not point clearly one way. The most important deterrent for most criminals is the likelihood of detection and arrest, and the knowledge that, for a serious crime, a long spell of imprisonment is not just a possibility but a certainty.

I fully understand that, in the aftermath of a particularly shocking murder, society is angry and demands revenge, but as Francis Bacon said:

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice".

Justice is not weakened by the absence of the capital sentence. Justice is strengthened if the public have confidence in the ability of the police and of the judicial system to detect, to arrest, to secure the conviction, and to see the imprisonment for long periods of criminals who are dangerous to society. That is the positive and necessary alternative to capital punishment.

Public confidence also depends upon a judicial system that is capable of recognising and making good errors that may appear from time to time. The restoration of capital punishment would preclude the making of such amends, and would therefore contribute to a lessening of public confidence in our judicial system. That is another reason why I shall vote against the amendments.

The right of all citizens to live their lives free from the fear of crime and peaceably to go about their business is one of the oldest rights that any Government must uphold. Let us concentrate all our efforts on a relentless and unremitting fight against crime and do all that we can to adopt policies that will aid the forces of law and order in that task.

Mr. Hattersley: I have already had the privilege of congratulating the Home Secretary on his assumption of such high office. It is now my pleasure to congratulate him on what I am sure the Committee will agree was an excellent speech. The one qualification in my congratulations is the clause to be moved by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). However, that does not detract from the quality of the Home Secretary's speech. He held the Committee's attention for almost an hour and his speech was a cliffhanger in that none of us knew whether at the end of his judicial analysis of the pros and cons of the argument the right hon. Gentleman would be for or against. I hope that I can match his persuasiveness and lucidity in what the Committee will be pleased to know will be a rather shorter speech.

Our debates about capital punishment, especially general debates on the subject which in a sense we now undertake because of the new clause tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), usually have two ingredients. The first ingredient is what I shall

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call the argument in principle: on the one hand the belief that the state does not possess the right to kill its citizens under any circumstances; and on the other the conviction that some crimes are so intrinsically wicked that they must be punished by nothing less than death.

The second ingredient is more pragmatic: it is the effect of the death penalty on the community. Opponents argue that its existence debases and literally demoralises society while its supporters insist that it is a deterrent to murderers, prevents murders and by stiffening the criminal code reduces the number of offences.

I think that most hon. Members made up their minds on those issues before they entered the Chamber for the debate and I suspect that most will agree that there is little new to be said about either ingredient. Our recent debates on the subject all cover the same well-trodden ground. Because of that, some of us were somewhat surprised that the Government thought it right to devote another full day this year to this subject. I understand that it is the result of an assurance by the previous Home Secretary which the present Home Secretary felt obliged to honour.

Perhaps the subject can never be fully put to rest, but I hope that in future we can at least avoid debating it twice in the lifetime of a Parliament. The Committee's judgment on the significance of this occasion is already clear. During previous debates on the subject, the Benches were packed and today's absence of participants in the debate, although not when we come to vote, demonstrates the clear view in all parts of the Committee that the subject has been dealt with, finished with, and cleared up. I hope that we can accept the Government's assurance that, however long this Parliament lasts, we will not have another debate of this sort before the general election.

I begin in this debate as I began in previous debates by asserting my belief that the death penalty is wrong in principle. The state has no right to take the life of one of its citizens. Even if there were evidence to demonstrate that the State's possession of that power was a deterrent to murder, I would still hold to that principle. I accept that that fundamental belief, like all such beliefs, is difficult to justify in hard logic. However, I can offer some supplementary justification for my position. There is the obvious example of the belief that a society which sanctions the taking of life is more likely to encourage violence than to discourage it, and that by killing murderers we become too like murderers ourselves. The whole community is reduced to at least part acceptance of the view that in some circumstances violence is justified. That is only the second—the subsidiary—part of my case against capital punishment. In my view, it is simply morally unjustifiable.

Anyone who doubts the debasement that society would suffer were hanging to return need only read the features page article in *The Sunday Telegraph* yesterday, which refers to a statement made in the House in 1988 by the then Home Secretary. He offered as one of his objections to capital punishment the way in which it would be treated by the newspapers. He said that a circus would be created and that the circus, which would revolve round every judicial hanging, would soon come to sicken society. I have no doubt that would happen, but equally I have no doubt that the blame would rest with society as much as with newspapers.

Some of the so-called deep thinkers on this issue demonstrate their views on how they believe that society should react to such a situation. Yesterday in *The Sunday Telegraph*, a Mr. Robin Harris, commenting on the previous Home Secretary's fears about media treatment, said that he would welcome the creation of a media circus round the judicial hanging. He said:

"The full horror of capital punishment, the practical preparations, the awfulness of the drama which unfolds and the cold finality of the execution itself are the only response which society can ever make to taking of human life."

I cannot see how the circumstances that he described could be anything other than debase society and, by debasing society, make it more violent, and by making it more violent, make crimes of every sort, including murder, more likely.

Mr. Maclennan: Has the right hon. Gentleman noticed that the abolition of public executions in 1869 followed a point in our history when homicide was at its highest level, but that, after the abolition of the circus associated with public executions, the offending rate fell noticeably in the next two decades?

Mr. Hattersley: It is important on these occasions not to carry any of the arguments to their logical or even illogical conclusions. The argument that we have to make a great show of the execution so that we demonstrate it in all its brutality and show in formal horror what executions are like is an argument for making the whole affair more public. Those of us who believe that the existence of judicial death debases society would take the opposite view and the fact that we are allowed by the fiat of society to kill people is more, not less, likely to create the violence that, in its turn, produces murder.

More important even than that in the article by Mr. Harris yesterday was his view that execution is the only possible response. I do not understand what justification is ever possible for the assertion, usually unsubstantiated, that judicial killing is the only possible response to murder.

Two years ago, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) made on television what can loosely be described as the ethical case for capital punishment, and did so, as the House would expect, with extraordinary passion. I quote her today simply because of the clarity with which she argued her case. She said that it was "only right" that some murderers should die. She did not go on to say why it was "only right", or indeed what "only right" means. The only possible interpretation is that she meant that one violent unnecessary death should be matched by an act of parallel violence sanctioned and carried out by the state in conditions of grotesque formality. In effect, that is the doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—a moral judgment that was subsequently qualified out of existence by the highest authority.

On the same television programme, the right hon. Member for Finchley then insisted that some murderers have

"forfeited the right to live".

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Hear, hear.

Mr. Hattersley: My notes say that I am sure that that opinion will be repeated here today and I might even have put in brackets that it would be likely that the hon.

Gentleman would say, "Hear, hear". Talk of the right to live and deserving to die is no more than the belief in retribution and revenge. There is no other way to justify it.

Mr. Dicks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: If the hon. Gentleman will give me a philosophical explanation of what is meant by
"forfeited the right to live",
I will gladly give way.

Mr. Dicks: With every right goes responsibility. With the right to life goes the responsibility to act reasonably. If one decides not to act reasonably, then one's right to live is in question. Most people would not share the right hon. Gentleman's concern if the perpetrators of the murder of Ian Gow had to suffer execution. There would be a mass welcome if such people were found and executed.

5.15 pm

Mr. Hattersley: I shall come on to the point of terrorism and terrorist murders later—the Home Secretary also dealt with them—but if the hon. Member thinks that that is a philosophical explanation of what is meant by the right to live, he misunderstands the principles that we are debating. In my view, and I believe in that of most hon. Members, the right to live is an inalienable right that the state does not have the power to withdraw from any of its citizens. The moral judgment inherent in taking the opposite view is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I do not believe that the Committee is about to pass that principle into English law.

In the opening speech, the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) talked about the punishment fitting the crime. I have not the faintest idea what that means in this context. If a man brutally and wantonly kills a child, if a man committing a robbery kills a policeman, if a drunken driver kills an innocent pedestrian, what is meant by the concept of the punishment fitting the crime? One of the features of debates on capital punishment is the reckless abandonment of logic that characterises so many speeches in a way that it would not characterise speeches on any other subject.

In other parts of the debate, the logic is more acceptable, although the evidence on which it is based is questionable. People have argued, will continue to argue and will argue today, that capital punishment can have a positively beneficial effect on society in that it deters murder. The statistics of crime give no support to that view. Certainly, in the recent past, the murder rate has increased, although it is nothing like it was, by coincidence, exactly 100 years ago and slightly less than it was 120, 130 and 150 years ago, but the increase in murder has been nothing like the increase in other crimes of violence over the past 20 or 25 years. In debate after debate, successive Home Secretaries have made the same speech about the conclusions that it is reasonable to draw from the statistics.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way, but I shall first give the Home Secretaries' conclusions and then the hon. Gentleman can argue with me and them simultaneously.

In 1988, the Home Secretary said:

"The statistics can and no doubt will be used both ways."—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1988; Vol. 134, c. 748.]

In 1983, the Home Secretary said:

"We should be making a great mistake if we expected them to give us an unequivocal answer."—[*Official Report*, 13 July 1983; Vol. 45, c. 886.]

In 1979, the Home Secretary said:

"The only sensible conclusion to reach is that their evidence is inconclusive"—[*Official Report*, 19 July 1979; Vol. 970, c. 2047.]

The Royal Commission on capital punishment said very much the same in 1963.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: In view of the right hon. Gentleman's strong feelings and his opinion that the evidence is clear, will he explain why he thinks that, over the 20 years from 1946 to 1964, in which general crime has more than doubled, the number of killings fell? In addition, why does he think that, whenever capital punishment is abolished, the situation changes dramatically? What does he think was the important factor around 1965 that led a static and declining rate to become a rising one?

Mr. Hattersley: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to say that when capital punishment is abolished the murder rate increases. The Home Secretary told us, and the hon. Gentleman can check for himself, that in many other countries where capital punishment has been abolished, the murder rate has not increased. In some places, it has gone down. Comparison between the retentionist and abolitionist states in the United States does not give any credence to the hon. Gentleman's view.

I cannot say why the figures for the brief period that the hon. Gentleman chose moved in the way that they did, but I can tell him the nature of his error. It is called post hoc ergo propter hoc. He is assuming that, because two things happen simultaneously, or one follows the other, the two are connected. There is no reason to assume that that is so. I repeat that that has been the judgment of successive Home Secretaries. It was the judgment of the Royal Commission on capital punishment in 1983. All international comparisons come to the same conclusion. Crime statistics confirm the judgment that the case for capital punishment as a deterrent is—at best, I speak from the point of view of those who want it returned—entirely unproven.

I recall what my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West said when I made the same point in 1988. He asked me to agree that once it was established that the statistics leave the matter open, it does not leave the argument neutral. He said that, if capital punishment were a deterrent, and given all the research that has been carried out, the case for its being a deterrent would have been clearly established by now. In my view, the logic of my right hon. and learned Friend's assertion is irrefutable.

All the evidence shows that it is impossible to demonstrate that capital punishment is a deterrent to any form of murder. Therefore, it is only reasonable to assume that it is not. Yet the proponents of capital punishment refuse to accept that. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), who is no longer in his place, interrupted my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West to ask him whether he had noticed that many horrible crimes are being committed day by day. He assumed that, by having our attention drawn to those crimes, we would accept a connection between their existence and the deterrent effect of capital punishment.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The right hon. Gentleman is on an important point. Does he agree that there is a widespread belief in our society that reintroducing the death penalty will be a panacea for many forms of crime that are entirely unconnected with capital offences? In fact, that is untrue. Capital punishment is a deterrent for only one type of offence, not for the entire range of offences that come before the courts.

Mr. Hattersley: I am sure that it is my fault, but I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is refuting my case or supporting it. In my doubt, I shall comment on what he said. One of the detriments of the capital punishment argument for society as a whole is the emphasis that it places on deterrence rather than prevention. It encourages the belief that, as long as penalties are sufficiently severe, crime will be reduced. There is hardly any evidence to support that. One of the problems of our society is that we spend too much time thinking about punishment and not enough about prevention. The capital punishment debate has concentrated too much attention on retribution, which is part of punishment, as compared with, and distinct from, prevention.

Mr. Archer: I fully accept what my right hon. Friend has just said. Does he agree with the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) that, in addition there appears to be an argument that if capital punishment is restored for murder, it will somehow reduce the incidence of grievous bodily harm? That is clearly a fallacy.

Mr. Hattersley: I agree with my right hon. and learned Friend. I shall come to that in a moment. It is a fallacy that is associated with the idea that crimes which take place now, especially burglaries, involve firearms whereas in the past they did not. The evidence is on the side of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Is capital punishment a general deterrent to crime? That is what we would have to believe if we were to find sympathy with new clause 3, to which the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) will speak. The fact that capital punishment is not a deterrent in most instances becomes obvious when we consider the background to murder in the United Kingdom. More than half the murders that are committed here are the result of sudden impulse or loss of temper. Three quarters are committed within the family or a close circle of friends.

It appears that 15 per cent. are committed by individuals who are defined clinically as mentally disturbed. Perhaps as many as 50 per cent. more are committed by men and women who could claim diminished responsibility before the courts. It is clear that for them capital punishment cannot be a deterrent. They would believe that they would be acquitted of the capital offence, and perhaps it is more likely that they would not even think about that when committing the offence.

Notwithstanding that consideration, I know that some hon. Members will argue that statistics and logic may show one thing but hard evidence, self-evident principles —common sense, as it has been described—demonstrate something quite different. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) used to refer to the hypothetical burglar in these debates. He would argue that, before the days of abolition, that burglar forbade his partner to carry a gun. I believe that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) quoted that example today. I have no doubt that we shall hear more of that burglar as the debate continues.

I have no doubt, either, that we shall be asked some hypothetical questions—for example, what now prevents a man serving a life sentence from killing a prison officer in the hope of making good his escape? We shall be asked how, except by capital punishment, the criminal who is already facing a long prison sentence can be deterred from killing a policeman to escape arrest. I think that it was the hon. Member for Lancaster who raised these questions during the previous debate on capital punishment. The then Home Secretary answered her by saying that in all the hypothetical cases—the burglar with a gun, the criminal attempting to avoid arrest and the prisoner trying to effect his escape—the length of the additional sentence was in itself a potent deterrent. That was said in 1988.

I wish to underline and endorse something said by the Home Secretary in a passage of particular eloquence. I share the right hon. Gentleman's view that, for some crimes, a long prison sentence is right, just and inevitable. Anyone who has visited one of Her Majesty's prisons, as I have and as he has, cannot doubt the consequence and severity of a prison sentence, the feeling of hopelessness that ensues and the erosion of personality and character that it involves. The idea that imprisonment for 20 or 30 years is a soft option is patent nonsense. When I visit a prison I always leave it, hearing the door clank, believing that anyone of a normal disposition who has seen a prison would be so concerned never to be incarcerated therein that he would be determined never to commit a crime again. It is enormously important in this debate not to dismiss a long prison sentence as something of no consequence and no punishment.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The right hon. Gentleman will have heard my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary say that one of the factors that disturbs criminals is certainty of detection and arrest. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that one reason for a criminal carrying a firearm is to wipe out witnesses so that he is never arrested and never has to suffer the degradation of 20 years of imprisonment?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I do not agree with that at all. The evidence suggests—this is an indication of the mentality and the morality of many members of the criminal classes —that criminals carry firearms in the real belief that they will never use them. That is a disastrous, reckless and wicked misjudgment of the situations in which they find themselves. The idea that criminals go out with the intention of burgling premises and of killing anyone who sees them is, on the evidence, a fallacy.

The hon. Lady leads me to another consideration——

Mr. Sayeed: As carrying a firearm in the commission of an offence attracts a life sentence, why should that deter a criminal from using a firearm to stop himself being caught? He will still get no more than a life sentence.

Mr. Hattersley: As the Home Secretary made clear about an hour ago, a life sentence is a variable term of imprisonment. He said that on some occasions it could be 20 years and in others 30 years. He added that in many other cases there should be imprisonment for the duration of natural life. The man who commits a second crime must know that 20 years is bad enough, that 30 years is 50 per

cent. worse and that entire life is total. There is an additional punishment. The hon. Gentleman does his case no good by pretending anything else.

Mr. Gale: May I press the right hon. Gentleman further?

Mr. Hattersley: I shall mention the hon. Gentleman in a moment. He should wait until I refer to an amendment which he tabled in a previous debate.

I emphasise that I believe that the Home Secretary was right that an additional prison sentence is in itself a deterrent to all the hypothetical cases of which we shall hear as the debate continues. If we are once or twice a year to hang a human being from his or her neck until he or she is dead, we must justify doing that by something more than vague suspicion, ancient anecdotes, long-held prejudices and bits of evidence that are dredged up from heaven know where.

The problems of dealing with the subject ad hominem were demonstrated by the hon. Member for Rydale. With respect to him, I am not sure that the description of killings witnessed is the best background against which to make a general decision on the reintroduction of capital punishment. By dealing with it in that way, it is easy to fall into the sort of errors which the hon. Gentleman made. He spoke of the 1,500 unlawful killings since we last debated the issue. That is a large and awful number, but he must know that the number is irrelevant to the debate, because most of those unlawful killings could not conceivably be covered by any of the new clauses.

Equally, there is the irrelevance of mentioning Lockerbie. It was a hideous crime, for which there has been no charge, let alone conviction. The likelihood is that the crime was perpetrated by a terrorist of foreign origin. The idea that the return of capital punishment might have prevented Lockerbie is the sort of fantasy that we hear only in this sort of debate. Having referred to Lockerbie and to terrorist crimes, and in talking about the deaths of policemen and prison officers——

5.30 pm

Mr. John Greenway: I wish to make it clear that in no part of my speech did I suggest that. I said that the number of unlawful killings justified the House debating the matter again tonight. It was in that context that I used those arguments.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not want to take passionate issue with the hon. Gentleman, because the subject must be debated calmly. If he did not think that quoting a figure of 1,500 was relevant to the debate, I am not sure that it was right for him to try to plant that figure in our minds and in the public's mind. If he did not think that Lockerbie was relevant, I am not sure that he was right to treat it in the same way.

I want to deal with the specific point of the killing of policemen and prison officers, as best I can, item by item. Almost everyone, including the hon. and learned Member for Burton, accepts that capital punishment is appropriate only for a limited number of murders in a limited number of categories—*[Interruption.]* I note that the hon. and learned Gentleman does not accept that. He is therefore excluded from the difficult question, for those who want capital punishment for certain categories, of how we categorise the wickedness of murder on the one hand and the deterrent effect of capital punishment on the other.

I have no idea how those who take a theological view of murder—that it is so wrong as in some cases to justify the death of the murderer—make an evaluation of the moral difference between killing a policeman and killing a child. I do not understand how we can evaluate different degrees of morality, one of which justifies death and the other of which does not. I emphasise that my objection to such a distinction is not that I minimise the horror of either sort of violence, but that I do not want the horror of homicidal violence to be extended to judicial execution.

That being said, I repeat the view that it is difficult to distinguish between one category of murder and another. It has been generally agreed since the 1957 Act, at least among supporters of hanging, that a distinction should be made between one form of murder and another. The application of that principle culminated in 1988 in an amendment moved by the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) which, incredibly, amounted to the introduction of a local option in these matters.

The attempts to differentiate between one murder and another demonstrate the difficulties of defining some hanging categories and excluding others. Until today, I had hoped that we had ruled out the notion that judges should be asked to make decisions between capital punishment and life imprisonment. We know from the Gower report that judges simply would not make that distinction. Gower was explicit in saying that capital punishment must be a mandatory offence for stipulated classes of murder because judges would not make a decision between life and death.

As I understand it, new clause 3 almost imposes that obligation on the Court of Appeal—three judges deciding whether a man should hang or whether a woman should be reprieved. I have severe doubts whether the judges would accept that obligation. I understand from the Home Secretary that the Lord Chief Justice is explicit on that point—he does not regard it as an appropriate function for judges to perform, especially in the circumstances that the Home Secretary described only in part. If every man or woman convicted of murder is to be sentenced to death, every man or woman so convicted will appeal. The idea that the Appeal Court should go through every murder re-examining the evidence to decide between life or death would be an intolerable burden to place on the judges, and one that they would be right to refuse.

The difficulties of characterising one offence as suitable for the death penalty and another as not suitable are best demonstrated by the proposal in new clause 2—that the death penalty is an appropriate punishment for people convicted of murder as part or in pursuance of an act of terrorism. The objections against selective murder indictments resulting in capital punishment in some cases but not in others are overwhelming, and they are especially overwhelming when they apply to the special category of terrorism. When consulted by the previous Home Secretary——

Mr. Archer: I apologise to my right hon. Friend for intervening again. Reverting to new clause 3, does my right hon. Friend understand the significance of the Court of Appeal being invited to consider what evidence was adduced at a trial? As it will not be open to a jury to make a distinction between capital and non-capital murder, the only significance of the evidence can be whether the conviction was safe.

Mr. Hattersley: I heard my right hon. and learned Friend make that point during his speech. Although I feel great trepidation in arguing with him, I do not think that that is the intention of the hon. and learned Member for Burton. It is not that the Court of Appeal should examine the appropriateness of the conviction and whether it is safe, but that it should consider such matters as extenuating circumstances. My right hon. and learned Friend's question comes from a logical legal mind. I do not believe that the answer shows such characteristics.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton is saying—I put this in the crudest layman's language—that everyone who is convicted of murder must be condemned to death. The Court of Appeal might then say, "This is a premeditated murder intended to result in vast financial gain. He should die." On the other hand, it might say, "This was a sudden act of passion. He will not die." The Court of Appeal will consider the circumstances of the murder. It is a bizarre proposal, and it is that bizarre quality that has made my right hon. and learned Friend misunderstand it. I believe that that is the bizarre intention of the hon. and learned Member for Burton. By drawing attention to it, my right hon. and learned Friend has demonstrated how impossible it would be to implement such an idea.

On the matter of terrorist crimes, the previous Chief Constable of Northern Ireland told the then Home Secretary that the extension of capital punishment would increase the difficulties in the Province. The present Chief Constable told the present Home Secretary that it would not be helpful. However, despite those pragmatic and practical objections, there are three much more powerful reasons for opposing the idea that terrorism should attract capital punishment.

First, as the Home Secretary said—it is right that this should be said from both sides of the House—to single out terrorism in that way would give the IRA something that it has wanted for years—special status. We have always insisted that IRA members are common criminals, and to treat them differently from other murderers would be to differentiate between them and the man or the woman who committed murder for other reasons. To differentiate in that way would be a prescription for creating martyrs.

Secondly, if the rule applied to Northern Ireland, we should be sending to the gallows men and women who had been convicted not by a jury of their peers, but by Diplock courts. Surely that would be intolerable in a democracy. Thirdly, we should be requiring the courts to make absurd distinctions between two classes of crime. If a man killed a postmaster while robbing a post office and gave the money to the IRA, presumably he would be hanged. If he killed the postmaster in the same circumstances but gambled the money at the Curragh or Leopardstown, presumably he would be sent to prison for life. One has only to describe such anomalies to see why the application of the death penalty to limited categories would be absurd.

Mr. Hunter: The right hon. Gentleman again makes the familiar point that one should not differentiate between IRA criminal activity and other ordinary criminal activity. We have done that for many years, starting when the Labour party was in government. We have proscribed organisations and scheduled offences. We have prevention of terrorism Acts. Surely this argument has worn thin over the years.

Mr. Hattersley: I do not believe that it has. I remember that, in the summer, the previous Prime Minister talked about being "at war" with the IRA. I was asked to comment and I said that occasional slips of the tongue should not be held against us, because that was not the Prime Minister's view of the IRA's status, and that members of the IRA were common criminals who must be treated in the same way as other criminals. I recall the Prime Minister saying in a broadcast that she did not believe that the members of the IRA were special people with special status about whom special laws should be created. That is the proper, necessary position if we are to defeat terrorism. We cannot deviate from it when, temporarily and emotionally, it seems convenient to do so.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): There is another aspect. It is not enough to say that there is a proscribed organisation. In the recent legal history of Northern Ireland, people have tried to prove that a particular person was a member of a proscribed organisation. I was advised that proscription hardly helped in that respect at all. It was almost impossible to prove it. It always ended up being a makeweight. I hope that the argument that there are proscribed organisations will not be called in aid, because the biggest organisation is the UDA, which is not proscribed.

Mr. Hattersley: My right hon. Friend should not provoke me to say what I did not propose to say—that Labour Members are anxious that in no particular should there be special criminal laws governing the conduct of and prosecution of the IRA. I shall not particularise our differences on that point, because I want to be as emollient as I can in this rational—I hope—debate. That may be slightly more difficult as I turn to the proposal by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West that we should no longer have the death penalty for treason and piracy.

Despite the compliments which I paid the Home Secretary, which were genuinely meant, I feel that the passage of his speech dealing with that matter was wholly unconvincing. I do not deny the propriety of inquiring into and examining the need to retain these ancient laws in principle. There is much to be said for examining the reasons why the laws of the 18th century—unused and unloved—have remained on our statute book for so long, but inquiring into them does not in any way justify the notion that we should not here and now abandon their attachment to the capital sentence.

The Home Secretary gave no convincing description why, for instance, the law on piracy, for which the last execution was 160 years ago, should not be modified to remove capital punishment. He gave no convincing explanation why a complete revision of the laws relating to treason would make it inappropriate to remove the capital punishment sentence now. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman talks about giving the erroneous impression that all we need to do is to change the sentence.

I believe that we could give the opposite impression were we not to remove the capital sentence. I suspect that hon. Members are united in believing that those laws need examining and eventually revision and, in part, abolition, but that is not an argument for retaining capital punishment while they are on the statute book. I shall vote

for the new clause tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West, and I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will do the same.

Many of us—I believe everyone on the Opposition Benches—regard the arguments against capital punishment in principle and in practice as overwhelming, but there is one argument which this year must be regarded as the strongest argument of all: the risk that innocent men and women will be hanged if capital punishment is retained. It is no good the hon. Member for Ryedale saying that that is an argument for improving the law. It is, and we must all struggle to improve the effectiveness and justice of the law. But some errors will occur, as they have occurred in every judicial system.

This punishment is distinguished from other punishments by the fact that, once the error has been made, there is no prospect of redress. Again, I share the Home Secretary's view that, after 15 years' wrongful imprisonment, a large sum of money is nothing like compensation for the period of life that has been lost. But compare that with hanging a man or woman who has been wrongly convicted and one begins to understand why a civilised society should not even risk that happening—not in 10 or 20 cases since the war, but in one case in a lifetime.

5.45 pm

When we last debated this subject, the hon. and learned Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) told the House that, since the war, there had been 10 cases of men and women convicted of murder who subsequently were found to have been convicted without appropriate evidence and their sentences and convictions were quashed. He told the House that nine of them had been subsequently released and one had been executed. This time the total is certainly 14, although it may be more. We know that the Guildford Four were wrongfully convicted. I have no doubt that, had the capital sentence been in operation, the Guildford Four would have been hanged.

Mr. Dickens: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that, because evidence was found to be unsafe and sentences were overturned, it does not necessarily follow that people were innocent? All those who escaped from the Maze prison to bomb again and murder other people, including one of our colleagues, did not have a trial by judge and jury. That is a silly argument.

Mr. Hattersley: Knowing the propensities of some Conservative Members, I was careful not to use the word "innocent" but to say "wrongfully convicted". I am opposed to hanging people who are wrongfully convicted. The question of evidence is important. Innocence is, in one sense, irrelevant. If a man or a women is wrongfully convicted by a court, clearly that person should not hang. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mrr. Dickens) tempts me to go on longer than I had intended because he made a point which other hon. Members raised earlier and which, no doubt, will be raised later: the idea that we may have to pay the price of hanging the occasional innocent man to deter others.

Let us assume that capital punishment is a deterrent. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth will recall that I do not accept that assumption, but even if that is so, the idea that we might say, "It is worth it to deter a few murderers," and that we should hang a man or a woman who has been wrongfully convicted is barbarous. I am sorry to put it in such dark language but it makes us too like the murderers themselves for me to be comfortable with such an idea.

Were capital punishment in place in general or for terrorist crimes, the Guildford Four would be dead. It is no insignificant fact that today the so-called, once-alleged Birmingham bombers come up for the second appearance before the Court of Appeal. I have no doubt that those men would be dead as well had capital punishment been in operation during that terrible time in 1974 when they were caught, prosecuted and convicted—in my view, wrongly—for the crimes in the two Birmingham public houses. I do not understand how, with those examples of wrongful conviction and possible wrongful executions hanging over us, anyone in the Chamber can vote for the return of capital punishment in any of its forms.

I shall certainly vote against all the new clauses, other than that tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West, which I shall support with great enthusiam. It is a matter of privilege and pride for me to think that all my right hon. and hon. Friends who go into the Lobbies tonight will vote against the return of capital punishment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I remind the Committee that the House has determined that our proceedings should conclude no later than 10 o'clock. I have the names of at least 20 right hon. and hon. Members who seek to catch my eye. Unless speeches are reasonably brief, I am afraid that some will be disappointed.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I do not see the slightest reason why those of us who advocate capital punishment should be on the defensive in this debate. Judging by the speeches made so far, we appear to be outnumbered, but it is time that we went on the attack nevertheless.

Why are we having another debate on capital punishment? We are having another debate because Parliament is the sounding board of the nation and because, if the public opinion polls are right, the nation is overwhelmingly in favour of the restoration of capital punishment. Those whom we represent are entitled to hear us discussing and debating the issue, giving our reasons for and against and taking the matter seriously because it goes to the heart of our fundamental security and stability that law and order should be preserved. We are taking the opportunity presented to us by the Criminal Justice Bill to suggest new provisions. That is why we are here.

Since we last debated the matter some two years ago, 1,500 people have been murdered. I believe in capital punishment because I believe that a substantial proportion of those 1,500 people would still be alive had the deterrent of capital punishment remained. That is what the debate is all about; it is about whether capital punishment would save the lives of innocent victims. If it would not, there is no excuse for it. If it would, it is a live issue. Moreover, the majority of people in Britain regard that as the reason for the restoration of capital punishment.

Mr. Wilshire: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend has intervened on several occasions. He will forgive me if I do not give way, because I must try to be brief.

[Mr. Lawrence]

It seems to those who think that the debate should not be taking place are those who oppose capital punishment. Those of us who are in favour of it take every reasonable opportunity to raise the matter in the House and to ensure proper discussion. Whether we win or we lose, those whom we represent will know that this Parliament is taking the subject seriously.

Those who oppose capital punishment wish life imprisonment to remain the ultimate deterrent. Let us examine that proposition. Has not life imprisonment been the most utter failure as a deterrent? Five years before the abolition of capital punishment, there were 290 murders a year on average. In the past five years, there have been 647 murders a year on average. Since the abolition of capital punishment, the number of murders has more than doubled.

In 1972, 2,000 crimes were carried out with guns and weapons. Last year, 10,000 crimes were carried out with guns and weapons. That means that there has been a fivefold increase.

In the 24 years before the abolition of capital punishment, 14 police officers were murdered: in the 24 years after its abolition 53 police officers were murdered. That means that there has been a fourfold increase.

Between 1963 and 1989, 59 people in England and Wales were killed by people who had previously been convicted of homicide. Had capital punishment remained, many of those criminals would not have been there to murder their second victims. So it cannot be said that life imprisonment—the alternative to capital punishment—has been a success; it has been a failure.

It is argued that one cannot prove that capital punishment is a deterrent. I concede at once that that cannot be proved conclusively and scientifically as it would be preposterous to suggest that one could ask 10,000 people whether they were in fact deterred from committing murder by the fact of capital punishment. However, much of the evidence tends to suggest that capital punishment is a deterrent.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary put an unfavourable interpretation on the United States statistics, but let us examine them. In 11 of the 12 states where capital punishment has been restored and where executions have been carried out, there has been a reduction in the murder rate. Of the 12 states without capital punishment, the majority—seven—have seen an increase in the murder rate and four a reduction. In one, the rate has remained the same. That suggests that the existence of capital punishment in American states has been responsible for the reduction in the murder rate.

Mr. Janman: My hon. and learned Friend has been describing the murder statistics for Britain and the United States. As he rightly said, the murder rate per million of the British population rose from 6·3 to 12·7 between 1964 and 1989. In other words, the number of murders more than doubled. In the United States—a country which I do not think many would regard as less violent than Britain; it is probably more violent—the murder rate per 100,000 of the population rose from 7·1 in 1970 to 8·4 in 1988. Capital punishment is available in many parts of the United States. We have abolished it. The statistics are clear.

Mr. Lawrence: I thank my hon. Friend for making a further point in favour of the United States statistics. I realise that the causal links are not always clear, that hand guns are readily available in the United States and that that is a complicating factor.

I concede that there is some conflicting evidence, but the trend is clear: in the parts of the United States where capital punishment has been restored and implemented, there has been a fall in the number of murders committed and in the murder rate. That is also consistent with the analyses made in universities. Professor Erlich of Chicago university showed that there was evidence of capital punishment having had a deterrent effect in the United States up to 1969. I know that that has been challenged, but the challenge has also been rebutted. At any rate, there is a respectable, logical, sensible, scientific argument to support the deterrence proposition. Kenneth Wolprin of Yale university drew the same conclusions using United Kingdom statistics dating from before the abolition of capital punishment. It is true that the evidence can be read both ways, but it cannot be said that there is no statistical evidence to support the deterrence theory.

Japan, a country whose achievements we admire, has the lowest murder rate in the developed world—one can almost call it the western world. Along with 50 other countries, Japan has not only continued to use capital punishment, but has extended it to other offences to which it did not apply before—to drug trafficking and rape in particular. Those countries have done that precisely because they believe that it is a deterrent. The IRA certainly believes that it is a deterrent. I have heard it suggested that that is not so, but when, in December 1975, I moved a motion in favour of the restoration of capital punishment for terrorist offences, the then head of the IRA issued an ultimatum. He said that, if the House reimposed capital punishment for terrorist offences, he would hang three British soldiers for every member of the IRA who was convicted and hanged. If that was not a threat, I do not know what it was. The head of the IRA made that threat because he believed that the existence of capital punishment would seriously undermine the effect and influence of the IRA. What other justification could he have had for threatening the House?

Before I came to the House, I spent much of my time as a criminal lawyer. In the 1960s, I defended a number of serious villains and I asked all of them whether the existence of capital punishment had deterred them from committing more serious crimes. Invariably the answer was yes. They said, "When we thought there was a risk of being hanged, we did not take guns with us when we committed a crime, and we did not take mad tearaway juveniles with us in case they pulled the trigger and people died as a result." I know that this evidence is anecdotal, but it comes from an impeccable source. I was told by people in the 1960s who had committed serious crimes that, when capital punishment had been available, they were deterred from committing such offences.

We must also consider common sense. The simple fear of being caught is not enough to deter people from committing crimes. People must be afraid about what might happen once they are caught. No one is much worried about being caught if, once he is caught, he gets only a pat on the head and tuppence out of the poor box. He will continue to offend for as long as he wants. The size of the sentence is the deterrent, and the real deterrent is the ultimate sentence of death.

6 pm

The ordinary people know as much as any expert about what deters people from committing serious crimes. The overwhelming majority are in favour of the restoration of capital punishment precisely because they believe that it would deter people from murdering innocent people and that innocent lives would be saved.

The police are at the sharp end. They have to fight in the streets with the murderers. The Police Federation has stated that capital punishment would be a deterrent to the criminals who use violence and kill. The Police Federation's view is good enough for me.

Taking all my evidence of deterrence together, there should be no more nonsense spoken in this place about there being no evidence that capital punishment deters.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman aware that, in Northern Ireland, the Police Federation, which represents the men on the ground who must work on when their colleagues are murdered, believes that capital punishment should return, but the senior, high-ranking officers who have been referred to today, and those of similar rank who have never been under attack or murdered, claim that there should not be a return to capital punishment?

Mr. Lawrence: It is clear that there is more evidence that capital punishment deters than that it does not.

If we do not have capital punishment, we must have life imprisonment, but that has failed. There is some evidence that capital punishment deters some people from committing murder. We need not ask how many people would be deterred, although that number might be significant. Bearing that in mind, what are the objections to the restoration of capital punishment?

It has been said that capital punishment is wrong in a civilised society. However, with so much lawlessness, why do we presume to have a thoroughly civilised society?

It has been argued that human life is sacred and that that is a reason to resist the restoration of capital punishment. But the life of the murder victim is also sacred and we should care about that person as well.

We are also told that retribution is wrong. If retribution were the reason for restoring capital punishment—and it is not my reason—I should rather we had retribution organised by the state after laws of evidence and proper court trials than retribution in dark alleys and streets at night because the law is incapable of protecting the innocent.

It has been said that capital punishment is contrary to God's teaching, but that depends upon which page of the writings concerning the Almighty we consider.

It has been said that capital punishment will create martyrs, and I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is afraid of that. But if we are to have martyrs, I believe that it is better that their martyrdom is celebrated once a year than that they be perpetual martyrs while they serve life imprisonment. That is what has happened to many people who are serving life imprisonment.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): What about the Guildford Four?

Mr. Lawrence: I shall consider the Guildford Four in a moment.

It has been said that, if we had capital punishment, there might be reprisals, particularly with respect to terrorist offences. If we give way to such blackmail, the law breakers will be making our law, and that would be utterly unacceptable to society.

It has been suggested that the reintroduction of capital punishment would lead to hostages being taken. But in recent years, the taking of hostages—I include aircraft hijacks—has occurred in respect of people who are prisoners, not in respect of people who have been subject to capital punishment.

The objectors claim that most murderers know their victims. So what? Why should a victim who is known to the offender have any less right to protection than the victim who is not known to the offender? I do not see the logic in that argument. If the cause of the offence was only passion and there was no premeditated calculation or any time span before the formulation of the desire to kill and the killing, that would not be murder. The jury would acquit of murder. It might convict of manslaughter, but there would be no question of the death penalty being imposed.

If someone is contemplating murder, he might bear in mind the fact that, with capital punishment, if he is caught he may die. If we are talking about the murder of someone who is known to the murderer or of someone in a family, if there is an element of premeditation or calculation by which that person would be convicted of murder, there is time for the deterrent aspect of capital punishment to take effect.

Mr. Hattersley: We have now established that the hon. and learned Gentleman's new clause is intended to provide an omnibus provision for capital punishment, so that everyone convicted of murder, of every category of murder —nothing relating to the 1957 categories—should be sentenced initially to death. If the new clause is accepted, can the hon. and learned Gentleman give us and the Court of Appeal any guidance about which categories he wants to hang? Under the new clause, everyone would be sentenced to death and some would hang and some would not. Until a moment ago, I had assumed that only a small number would go to the gallows, but the hon. and learned Gentleman has suggested that his new clause will send virtually every murderer to his or her death. Is that what he means?

Mr. Lawrence: No, not at all. The right hon. Gentleman came closer in his speech to appreciating the value of my new clause. The point of the new clause is that if, following a death sentence for any offence there is some reasonable argument why the death penalty should not be carried out, in that particular case, the Court of Appeal would say, "Not death, life imprisonment."

It is not a matter of categories—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) may laugh and shake his head, but it is not a question of categories. I am not putting down a list of categories under which someone will or will not die. I am describing a situation in which, according to ordinary common sense—and our judges exercise common sense —if anything can be said as to why a person should not die, whatever the category of offence, the sentence of life imprisonment should be substituted.

[Mr. Lawrence]

It has been said that hanging is too horrible. If that is the case, we could develop other methods, such as those that exist in other countries.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook commented adversely on an article in *The Sunday Telegraph* by Robin Harris. I do not believe that what Robin Harris said in that article was as absurd as the right hon. Gentleman made out. The more people who are aware of, and feel the horror of, the punishment and the taking of life that caused it, the more respect will be engendered in our society for human life and the greater will be the element of deterrence. That is what Robin Harris was saying; he was not glorifying the circus that surrounds some murders.

Finally, we must consider the possibility of mistakes. That is the most powerful argument against the restoration of capital punishment, and it has been discussed at length in our debate today. I shall address that issue as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary demanded that I should.

To avoid mistakes, as far as humanly possible, is one of the main purposes of the review tribunal in my new clause 3. In essence, I repeat that the purpose of the review tribunal, once the death sentence has been passed, is to ask, "Is there any sensible, humane reason in this case why the death sentence should not be imposed?" The Court of Appeal would consist of three, five, or as many High Court judges as is thought prudent, and they would sit as soon as practicable. I hope that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will listen carefully to this point, as it answers some of his questions. I have his rapt attention so far. They would consider any circumstances, not just the circumstances that had been admitted in evidence at the trial, circumstances that surround both the offence itself and the offender.

I must inform the right hon. Gentleman that there are exclusionary rules of evidence. Not everything that emerges during the investigation of a murder case is admissable in a trial. All sorts of details and all sorts of facts about a person and the circumstances are ruled out as inadmissable. From my reading, I cannot remember whether what I am about to say applied to Timothy Evans, who has been found to have suffered one of the miscarriages of justice. It was nobody's fault that Christie, whom everybody believed to be an honourable person, turned out to be a mass murderer. But Timothy Evans would not have hanged if—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) will allow me, Timothy Evans would not have hanged if the Court of Appeal, sitting afterwards, had heard evidence that he had the mental age of a child of 12, below the age at which one would expect anybody to have moral culpability. The Court of Appeal would have said, "Even though he did it, he should not hang."

Hanratty is another example. He was convicted because he put forward a false alibi. If he had run the defence of diminished responsibility, he would not have hanged; he would have been found guilty of manslaughter. The Court of Appeal sitting after that could have heard that there was an alternative defence that he could have run. The court could have called evidence to see whether it was satisfied by it, and if it had been satisfied that he was suffering from diminished responsibility, he would not have hanged.

I now refer to Craig and Bentley. Bentley was hanged despite the fact that Craig was the one who told him to shoot. Craig could not hang because he was 16. There is a manifest injustice, is there not, in having two parties, both of whom are equally to blame, and one hangs because he is a little older and one does not hang because he is a little younger? That is the sort of matter in which——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): It is the other way round.

Mr. Lawrence: No, it is not. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would not heckle. The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. It is not the other way round. Craig lived and Bentley died. Bentley was the elder of the two. That is precisely the sort of extraneous matter that the Court of Appeal would consider.

One could go further and say that, even if the evidence of identification were so positive that a jury would accept the identification evidence of one witness, the Court of Appeal might say, "Even one positive identification that satisfied the jury is open to the possibility of error, and there should be no death penalty." Even if somebody confessed to the police in circumstances that were utterly impeccable—one could not criticise them—and said, "All right, I did it," the Court of Appeal might say, "That is not enough; there must be more evidence than one confession before the man will die." He was undoubtedly guilty because he was convicted by a jury and because the evidence was impeccable, but whether a person should die when there is an outside possibility that just one piece of evidence might have been wrong is a matter that the tribunal could take into account.

I now refer to the Guildford Four. It is preposterous for the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook or anybody else to assume that, if there had been the death penalty, all these terrorist offences would have been committed. Because the death penalty deters terrorism, it is one of the reasons why we advance the cause of the restoration of capital punishment. It is equally preposterous to assume that, if there had been the death penalty, police officers would have lied about the circumstances in which they took a statement. Perhaps they would have done, but there cannot be the certainty with which the right hon. Gentleman seems to have invested so much of what he says.

If there were the penalty of death and the only evidence against the men were confessions, there is no certainty that a jury would ever have convicted them.

Anyway, the situation has changed—it can no longer occur. These convictions took place in relation to the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six 15 years ago, since when we have introduced the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. That Act safeguards the interrogation of suspects. There is absolutely no reason why every interrogation of a murder suspect should not be tape-recorded and video-recorded, so that there could be no question about the integrity of such investigations. If we had those safeguards, it would be almost impossible for the mistake that happened 15 years ago to happen again.

6.15 pm

Mr. Hattersley: I fear that the hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong in that particular. If what happened in Birmingham and in Guildford occurred again, the men who were immediately arrested would not be subject to all

the protections of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; they would be initially cross-examined under the prevention of terrorism legislation, which excludes those protections.

Mr. Lawrence: That is all the more reason why the Court of Appeal in considering the matter—*[Laughter.]* It is no use laughing. The Court of Appeal considering the matter could say, "If these alleged terrorists have not been afforded the normal protections of the court, then we cannot be 100 per cent. sure about the confession evidence". In the case of the Birmingham Six, there is more evidence than the confession to be considered. In the case of the Guildford Four, there was only confession evidence. Even if the confession evidence was beyond reproach, as it might have been under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act—whatever the right hon. Gentleman says about that, although there may be different circumstances in regard to the Birmingham Six—there might not have been capital punishment if there was no corroboration of the confession.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I am somewhat confused by the line of the hon. and learned Gentleman's argument. He made the case that there was a substantial inherent deterrent in the death penalty, and he referred to terrorism, especially Irish terrorism. The death penalty has existed for the greater part of 800 years, and it has proved to be anything but a deterrent. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman take on board the fact that the real sea change in Irish life came about as a result of the use of capital punishment in 1916? It changed the course of Irish history from then until now.

Mr. Lawrence: If I can be forgiven for leaving the Irish aspect of this dispute to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I shall save time, because I am taking up rather a lot of time in dealing with these important matters. To conclude on this point, the possibility of mistake is not a valid reason for refusing to protect the lives of innocent people who would otherwise die if we do not have the deterrence of capital punishment.

I refer now to another attraction—if I may be so bold as to suggest that anything that I have said has attractions—of new clause 3 than the avoidance of mistake. Only if all murder was subject to the death penalty would it be an effective deterrent. The murderer contemplating murder would never know in advance whether he was likely to be reprieved. He would have to assume that he would not be reprieved and that he might suffer the death penalty. That is the secondary importance of the Court of Appeal and the requirement that the penalty for murder shall be mandatory death.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has analysed new clause 3 and has made four criticisms. First, he said that juries would be more likely to acquit. That may be so, but not where the crime is so heinous that everybody feels that death is the only appropriate result that should follow. If there is doubt about the case, it is absolutely right that the jury should acquit. We could have no possible objection to that. If the existence of capital punishment makes juries more concerned to look for doubts and to give the verdict according to any doubt that they find, we should welcome that, not object to it. However, even were the jury to acquit against the evidence, there would often be the possibility of a manslaughter alternative. In any event, no would-be murderer would know in advance that the jury was likely to acquit and the deterrent value of capital punishment would still exist.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend says that the Lord Chief Justice has said that life or death should be a decision taken by this Parliament. If new clause 3 is accepted, Parliament will indeed have decided that death shall be the punishment for murder. The judges' role will be to be merciful in a proper case. Parliament would have given judges the power to be merciful. I find it difficult to believe that the Lord Chief Justice would be against giving judges the power to be merciful once Parliament had decided that the death penalty shall be mandatory unless there are grounds for mercy. I can see no objection in the Lord Chief Justice's response to what I have suggested and to what my right hon. Friend has said.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary objects that the Court of Appeal would not have seen witnesses. That is no argument because, in any event, the Court of Appeal seldom sees witnesses before an appeal. However, it does see witnesses in some circumstances and it could in this instance. If there was an argument that required the calling of evidence that was not admissible in the lower court of trial, such evidence could be considered by the Court of Appeal. I remind my right hon. Friend who has come to the position of Home Secretary after Parliament passed these provisions into law, that the Government never considered the fact that the judges in the Court of Appeal had not seen the witnesses to be a valid reason for refusing to allow the Court of Appeal the right to increase sentences. I do not understand why, if it is not necessary to see a witness in order to increase the sentence, it is necessary to see a witness in order to reduce a sentence.

Fourthly, in criticism of new clause 3, my right hon. Friend has said that there would be the possibility of delays in carrying out the sentence and then a media circus would take place. If there are unacceptable delays, the Court of Appeal will have to sit more often. If there are so many murders, it will have to sit every day. Why is it so impossible for the lawyers and the judges of this land to sit regularly and frequently to consider such matters?

As for salacious media interest, why does my right hon. Friend assume that the media would always be in favour of the murderer, never the victim? Why does he assume that such coverage day after day would be good copy? Why does he assume that there would be nothing else on the front pages day after day except murderers—no politics, nothing about the state of the world, no bimbos and nothing about the sexual activities of anybody in public life? Why does he assume that murderers and their victims would always be on the front pages? That is taking that assumption far too far. Avoiding saving innocent lives simply for reasons of bad publicity seems a wholly bad reason.

We shall, of course, vote tonight where our consciences lead us, but I shall vote for capital punishment because the alternative has failed and because too many innocent people have died and too many innocent people will go on dying unless there is an effective deterrent, which life imprisonment is not. I shall vote for capital punishment because I believe that it deters some murderers—perhaps many. I believe that we should not only, in the words of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, "shed tears for the victims rather than for the offender"; I believe that we should take steps to save the lives of the innocent victims,

[Mr. Lawrence]

not simply cry tears for them. By "innocent victims", I include all those who are maimed through the carrying of firearms and not necessarily only those who are murdered.

I shall vote against new clause 4 because treason involves the death of many. It is exceptionally serious and the law should not be reformed only as a side wind in another debate. It also involves the monarch and there should be a proper examination of her interests, which I am sure has not taken place in the short time since the tabling of the new clause. I shall therefore vote against that new clause.

But I have tabled and seek this opportunity to speak to new clause 3 because I want to see the lives of the innocent saved. That is my only purpose. I shall therefore support new clauses 2, 6 and 7 because they are steps towards that end.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): My colleagues generally take the view that a person who deliberately takes a life forfeits his or her right to life. That is a fairly simply and straightforward view that would apply to all murders. However, I feel somewhat uneasy with that position, for two reasons. First, as has been said, most murders occur within a domestic environment where right and wrong do not separate as absolutely as the proposed penalty of capital punishment.

Secondly, as has also been said, there is the danger of a mistake—the danger that innocent people may be hanged. Undoubtedly, that has happened. As has been suggested, that consideration could lead to the conclusion that the courts should do their job better. It has also been suggested that procedural reforms might assist in that regard. Other reforms have been mentioned recently about the operation of the Court of Appeal, and I have tabled some amendments to the Emergency Provisions Bill which are not irrelevant to this, but that is by the way.

The danger of a mistake and the nature of its consequences are such that there must be some additional compelling reasons to justify a risk, however small, to the innocent. For that reason, I do not favour new clause 3, which has been tabled by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) because of its general nature. In addition, referring cases to the Court of Appeal is undesirable because, although they may be decisions on matters of fact, the decisions of the Court of Appeal are likely to be treated as precedents. That would be unfortunate and inappropriate in this context.

Having said that there should be some additional compelling reasons to justify the risk of hanging the innocent, I am sure that the supporters of new clause 1 see that additional reason as the need to protect certain persons; they have mentioned policemen. The supporters of new clause 6 have mentioned prison officers. Those persons are called upon to risk themselves in the defence of the community. I emphasise the words "called upon" because there are circumstances in which it is the duty of police officers and prison officers to expose themselves to risk, and they do so in defence of the whole community.

I have no doubt that there are occasions when the greater good of defending the whole community can justify capital punishment. In saying that, I accept that there may be a risk to other persons, and that it is a matter of balancing the risks. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when the greater good of defending the community justifies the resort of capital punishment. For that reason, I support new clauses 1 and 2.

Short of war, the need to defend the community is greatest when we are confronted with terrorism, which is an attack on the whole community. The need to defeat that form of warfare against the community should and does provide a compelling reason for supporting new clause 2. It should be compelling to all but committed pacifists. I disagreed with the Home Secretary on that. It is not right to regard terrorism as an ordinary form of crime, however attractive it may be to do so. Its motivation and character are different.

Terrorism is indiscriminately directed against the community. It is a form of declaration of war on society by a group of people. We should not suffer by recognising that that is what it is. That does not make it legitimate. It is a particularly loathsome form of warfare. Indeed, if the international conventions on the conduct of war applied, most terrorist activities would be war crimes and if those who were caught were not wearing a uniform, they would be persons whom, under the prevailing laws of war, the authorities would be perfectly entitled to execute out of hand. One does not suffer by recognising what terrorism is.

It has been suggested that, in the context of terrorism, capital punishment would be counter-productive. I am not sure that the record supports that. There were some interesting precedents in what happened in Ireland this century, particularly in the 1920s. In May 1922, the newly established Northern Ireland Government became responsible for security in the midst of a terrorist war which had started in 1919. The first Ulster premier, Sir James Craig, decided as a matter of policy that he would not invoke the death penalty, and, indeed, he did not do so. He considered that reliance on the death penalty would deepen and prolong the bitterness that existed in the community.

6.30 pm

In the same year, civil war broke out in the Irish Free State—what is now the Republic of Ireland. The Government of the Irish Free State took a different view from that of the Government of Northern Ireland. About 80 persons were officially executed, and it is believed that about double that number were unofficially executed in killings which were not admitted by the forces of the Irish Free State but were carried out under the direction of the Government.

Conventional wisdom among historians and politicians is that those killings permanently embittered the politics of the Irish Republic. But since then, a comparatively liberal Ulster has been racked by successive outbreaks of terrorism while, in what was a repressive Republic, the provisional IRA has a standing order which forbids violence. So one must admit that the Republic's security policy has been more successful.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. Gentleman referred to official and unofficial executions. Perhaps he should amend that and describe both sets of executions as unofficial. The executions were the result of cases brought, not before the courts but before kangaroo military tribunals.

Mr. Trimble: I do not wish to be drawn into a semantic argument on that point. The executions were official in the sense that they were carried out by the lawful authorities of the Irish Free State, acting under the law in force at the

time, according to the procedures under which the Government operated. Admittedly, the executions were carried out under a regime of martial law, but that does not change the fact that they were official executions at the time. The unofficial executions were those which were not admitted and were carried out by what journalists today would call death squads sent out by Ministers in Dublin for that purpose.

I was examining the contrast between the positions taken in Northern Ireland and in the Irish Free State. In Northern Ireland, the death penalty was not resorted to, yet we have continuing terrorism. In the Irish Republic, the death penalty was resorted to on a massive scale, and it has had peace since the 1920s.

New clause 4 reminds us that the death penalty is available for many of the terrorist crimes committed in Northern Ireland. Many of those crimes come within the definition of treason. One could invoke the death penalty, if only people were charged with treason. Clearly, we must ask why, in such cases, people are not charged in the appropriate manner. The charge is available.

It cannot simply be the decision of the Law Officers of the Crown exercising their discretion not to charge people with treason, because that discretion has been exercised in an identical way under successive Governments. It is more a matter of Government policy. Indeed, there was some hint of that in the Home Secretary's speech, when he said that the charge of treason was used only in the case of war. That may explain why no one has been charged with treason in Ulster in the past 20 years.

The Government's inconsistency would be resolved if they supported new clause 4 and removed the death penalty for treason. However, the Home Secretary said that the Government do not intend to do so. I agree with the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), who spoke to new clause 4, that the answers given were rather poor on that point. Some of us suspect that there are other reasons. It seems that the Shakespearean couplet might apply:

"Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason?
For if it prosper, none dare call it treason."

One wonders whether the reason why the Government dare not call it treason is that some members of the Government expect, or even intend, that treason to prosper.

That would be in line with the recent speech of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in which he described the objectives of the IRA as "legitimate". I wonder how one of Her Majesty's Ministers can defend that. Nothing is more likely to encourage terrorism than to describe its objectives as legitimate. Nothing is more likely to discourage it than making it clear that the state will use all the legal weapons in its armoury to combat it.

It has been said that terrorism in Ulster, particularly republican terrorism, is a high-status, low-risk occupation. We can do nothing to lower its status, because its status is conferred on it by the community in which it operates, but we can do something to increase the risk, and we certainly should do so.

Sir John Wheeler: The arguments presented to the Committee this evening have, predictably, covered both the moral and practical issues and have been rehearsed many times in the Chamber in previous debates. This is a subject on which many hon. Members on both sides of the arguments have particularly strong and absolute views. They are not to be swayed by continued argument, even of the magisterial nature of the arguments delivered to the Committee a few moments ago by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence).

I shall not repeat all the points that have been made. I shall make some points of my own. It would be utterly wrong to reintroduce capital punishment without the most conclusive evidence that the death penalty is a unique deterrent. I contend that no such evidence exists. Worldwide research suggests that the death penalty would not reduce the murder rate but would simply lead to a greater coarsening of attitudes to human life. Little can be proved by citing offence rates over a long period since abolition because over such periods crime rates can vary a great deal for reasons which have no connection with the death penalty. Nevertheless, during the 20 years from 1969 to 1989, the percentage rise in the number of homicides in England and Wales was less than half the percentage increase in all other indictable offences, for most of which there was no comparable change in penalty.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Sir John Wheeler: With reluctance.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I merely wish to point out that a dead body is more obvious than the consequence of any other form of crime. The reporting of other types of crime may have increased, but the reporting of murder is unlikely to have increased because it is such an obvious crime.

Sir John Wheeler: As I said at the beginning of my speech, those in favour of the restoration of capital punishment are unlikely to be persuaded by anything that I or anyone else may say against it. That will be especially true if we bat the various statistics to and fro across the Chamber or between ourselves.

I contend that some tentative conclusions—I state it as marginally as that—can be drawn from the figures for crime shortly before and shortly after the abolition of capital punishment in 1965. Before then, there were two categories of murder: capital and non-capital. The former included murder in the furtherance of theft, murder by shooting and the murder of a police or prison officer. Following the abolition of capital punishment, there was an increase in the number of murders judged to be capital. However, the increase began before abolition, so cannot have been caused by it. There was a corresponding increase in non-capital murder, for which there was no change in penalties, and in crimes of violence generally, for which there was no change in penalties.

The evidence from abroad also casts doubt on the unique deterrent value of capital punishment. For example, many studies in the United States of America have compared the murder rates of abolitionist and neighbouring retentionist states, murder rates in states which abolished and later restored capital punishment, the number of homicides just before and just after a sentence of execution, killings of police officers in cities of abolitionist and retentionist states and the incidence of fatal assaults in prison. They contain no evidence that the absence of the death penalty increases murders or that its presence deters capital offenders.

Even many advocates of the death penalty recognise that most murders are emotional and impulsive, and

[Sir John Wheeler]

largely within the family or among close associates, thus not susceptible to the deterrence argument. Therefore, most advocates of capital punishment favour restricting it to certain types of murder. Yet any attempt to make such distinctions in legislation would produce invidious and morally indefensible results in the future just as it did in the past.

New clause 1 refers specifically to police officers. Yet the figures for murders of police and prison officers before and after the abolition of capital punishment suggest that capital punishment has no unique deterrent effect. The number of killings of police officers resulting in murder convictions has varied between nought and six every year since 1958. In the 31 years from 1957 to 1989, 27 police officers were murdered on duty out of a total of 51 police homicides, with no killings in 1957, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1968 and 1976.

New clause 6 refers to prison officers, and for them the argument is even less sustainable. In a period of nearly 50 years, when the prison population has more than doubled and more high-risk offenders have been in prison than ever before, only two prison officers have been killed—one in 1948 and one in 1965. New clause 5 refers to firearms. In the 10 years from 1977 to 1988 the average number of homicides by shooting was 48 with considerable annual variations, as one might expect from small figures. There is no case that gun killing has changed in any way to necessitate a special penalty.

New clauses 2 and 3 relate to terrorism in Northern Ireland. I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) and it is understandable that there should be strong feelings about the death penalty for at least terrorist murders. In fact, terrorists are even less likely to be deterred than other murderers. They are fanatics who are perverted in their thinking and feeling and who see themselves fighting for a cause higher than themselves. They are willing to live in a state of dangerous exaltation in which they hold even their own lives at a relatively low price.

First, it would be necessary to define what a terrorist murder is. Would it be a murder committed by a known member of the provisional IRA or of a middle east terrorist group? Would it apply to a known terrorist engaged in an ordinary crime, such as a bank robbery, where killing occurs? Given that political status for the inmates of the Maze prison has long been withdrawn, would not a working definition of terrorism produce irresistible demands for the restoration of that status on the grounds that the criteria of political crimes had at last been set out?

6.45 pm

Mr. Hunter: My hon. Friend is making a fundamental mistake in overlooking the fact that we already have definitions of terrorism and terrorist activities on the statute book. We have proscribed organisations and scheduled offences.

Sir John Wheeler: I gave way to my hon. Friend because his name leads those who propose that the death penalty should be applicable to people who are called terrorists. He proposes a special and separate penalty for a category of offenders who would have to be separately defined within this Criminal Justice Bill. That would be a fatal mistake.

It is incredible that new clause 3 would make the death penalty apply in Northern Ireland. No one has been hanged in the United Kingdom for hundreds of years except on the verdict of a jury. As is well known to the Committee, the degree of intimidation in Northern Ireland is such that it has not been possible to try such cases by jury. They are tried by the Diplock, one-judge courts. Has anyone asked the Northern Ireland judiciary whether it is prepared to act as judge and jury in capital cases?

There are other important reasons arguing against the introduction of capital punishment for terrorist murder, many of which have already been mentioned. In the stages leading up to an execution, a terrorist would have a strong motive for taking and threatening to kill hostages and for intimidating all those taking part in the trial, particularly jurors. There would be the expectation that executions would be followed by reprisals. Informers would be less likely to help the police.

Since capital punishment would not apply to those under 18, the death penalty would reinforce the trend for terrorist organisations to recruit increasingly young members. Capital punishment would create martyrs and there is considerable evidence that martyrs stimulate support for and recruitment to terrorist organisations. For all those reasons, I agree with many senior Army and police officers that the reintroduction of capital punishment would hinder rather than help the fight against terrorism.

A substantial proportion of homicides in England, Wales and elsewhere are committed by people in an abnormal state. Most murder victims are killed as a result of rage, quarrels or jealousy. In more than 70 per cent. of homicide cases, the victim was a member of the suspect's family, such as a spouse or lover. The deliberately planned and carefully executed murder, on which my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton touched, is relatively rare. Deterrence in the form of capital punishment would work only for those who think before killing.

The best protection for the public remains the certainty of detection. Most of the more serious offences are cleared up. In 1988-89 the clear-up rate for crimes of violence against a person was 75 per cent., for frauds and forgeries it was about 70 per cent. and for theft and burglary overall it was about 30 per cent. Remarkably, the clear-up rate for homicides is 96 per cent. That is the best form of deterrence.

In concluding, I should like to touch briefly on new clause 4 proposed by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). He renders a great service to the House in bringing to our attention the technical availability of the death penalty for offences in archaic Acts of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

It is perhaps relevant to say that the 18th century saw the greatest use of capital punishment, but controversy over its use was as sharp then as it is today. By 1820, there were no fewer than 200 offences for which, in theory, capital punishment could be imposed, but such was public opinion that juries would often refuse to convict regardless of the evidence. It is also relevant that even in those cases where the death penalty was given, only about 10 per cent. resulted in execution—so much for the deterrent argument.

I have great sympathy with what the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West has proposed, but I regret that I cannot support him in the Lobby because I believe that those old Acts and the offences they create are in need of repeal. I do not want to substitute a sentence of life imprisonment for an offence that could be abolished or at least reformed to suit the modern age.

I believe that the House should invite the Law Commission to give urgent consideration to the abolition or review of those archaic Acts, when I would wish any penalty to be available to the courts to be anything other than the death penalty.

Mr. Rees: I liked the reference of the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) to the 18th and 19th centuries. A study of the statistics on the recent upsurge in crime in comparison with that committed in the 1920s and 1930s might suggest that the explanation is a sociological one. At one time I read about the middle years of the 19th century in great depth. The vast number of murders then committed seemed to have nothing to do with the number of people hanged in London at the time. There is no relationship between the two.

The hon. Member for Westminster, North also referred to the Diplock courts and the no-jury trials. I agree that that makes new clause 3 extremely defective. Terrorism is at large in Northern Ireland, but the new clause does not appear to understand that.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) raised a number of historical issues to explain why there was relative peace in the south of Ireland rather than in the north. We do not pay nearly enough attention to Northern Ireland in the House because most of us know little about it. When we talk about crime and punishment we do so in terms of England, Wales and Scotland.

I regret that the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) is no longer in his place—*[Interruption.]* I notice that he is occupying the seat of the Chief Whip—no doubt doing what he would like to do, but has not yet achieved. I do not agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman that there would be 1,500 fewer murders if capital punishment had been available in the past 20 years. That can only be a guess. I believe that he has misread the statistics on murder and probably confused them with those on homicide. I do not believe that anecdotal evidence will do about the use of guns. The trigger point to determine which cases should go to the Court of Appeal should be given far greater attention. I shall vote against the hon. and learned Gentleman's new clause.

I appreciate the point behind the new clause on piracy tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer). Whatever happens tonight, I hope that the Home Office and the Ministry of Defence will consider that part of the Armed Forces Act 1971 that relates to sedition and mutiny. I have a personal interest in that, because men were charged with mutiny at Salerno. I shall not rehearse the story, but I understand what those men and other people felt. Those men could have been sentenced to death and it would have been wrong. My noble and learned Friend Lord Elwyn-Jones played a part in preventing those men from being shot. In common with the legislation on piracy, the death penalty for mutiny should be reviewed because it is as misplaced today as it was 40 years ago.

I intervened earlier in the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) to say that proscription and membership of a terrorist organisation are insufficient evidence when it comes to sentencing people to death. I remember when the last detainee came out of the Maze as a result of the House's decision. The last man out made it clear to television reporters that he was a member of the IRA. I mentioned that to the police and said that I thought that one could be brought to court for such membership. I was told that it would be extremely difficult to prove in court that someone was a member of the IRA, the Red Hand Commandos, the Ulster Freedom Fighters or the Ulster Volunteer Force. To seek to impose the death penalty when the evidence rests upon membership and proscription is a mistake.

It is only those who do not know Northern Ireland who could argue that martyrdom is something with which one could live. That country is shot through with stories of past martyrs. That is one reason why killing and shooting still takes place. We are not talking about England, Wales or Scotland. Such martyrdom is part and parcel of the life of Northern Ireland and to ignore that flies in the face of Ireland's history.

I have my own anecdotal evidence about martyrs. My father, a Welsh coal miner, was a soldier at the Easter rising. He belonged to an Irish regiment then in France but he was brought back to go to Ireland. To some extent, I was brought up with the story of that rising. The fact that the British, as a result of military courts, shot people involved in that uprising—some of them sitting down, including James Connolly—broke the Irish parliamentary party. It was finished because of the way in which the British had acted towards the Irish. We forget about the history of Ireland when we talk in terms of England and the new clauses.

Mr. Trimble: If one carried the right hon. Gentleman's point about martyrdom to its logical conclusion, it would mean that the police and soldiers would be prevented from using lethal force in circumstances where they are entitled so to act. Martyrs would also be created in those circumstances. The 1916 executions did not cause the break-up of the Irish parliamentary party, the home rule party, but the opposition to that party from Catholic bishops. That opposition was first manifest in June 1916, but was repeated in forthcoming years.

Mr. Rees: I must give in on the argument about the Catholic bishops. That intervention illustrates the nature of the problem in Northern Ireland far better than anything that I might say.

Why did the Conservative Government before 1974 amend legislation so that there was no capital punishment in Northern Ireland? Many right hon. and hon. Members now present voted in favour of that decision. A note prepared for me at that time outlined that the death penalty came under two pieces of legislation, section 6 of the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 and section 10 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 1966.

The first step was to do away with the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) (Northern Ireland) Act 1922. The second was to leave in section 10 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 1966. Albert Brown, a Protestant and a member of the UDA, was found guilty of murdering a member of the RUC with a licensed gun and sentenced to death. Lord Whitelaw reprieved him because he was told

[Mr. Rees]

by the security authorities in Northern Ireland that, if Albert Brown was hanged, they could not hold Belfast. What is the use of bringing back capital punishment and flying in the face of what happened as recently as 1973? As a result, Lord Whitelaw, who was in favour of capital punishment, came to the Dispatch Box and said that he had changed his mind, not because he had read books but because he had learnt in Northern Ireland that he could not allow the death penalty to be carried out.

7 pm

The same thing happened shortly afterwards when, after an amendment had been passed in the House, a man called William Gerald Holden, a Roman Catholic 19-year-old chef, was sentenced to death for the murder of Private Frank Bell of the 2nd Parachute Regiment. The then Secretary of State, Lord Whitelaw, also reprieved that man. Therefore, the same law applied on both sides of the community.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Whitewash.

Mr. Rees: It is no good saying "Whitewash", which is what some of the majority community called Lord Whitelaw. The advice given from a Conservative Minister was that capital punishment could not be carried out in Northern Ireland. Capital punishment would be a mistake for Northern Ireland. I happen to think that it would be a mistake in the whole of the United Kingdom, but it would certainly be a mistake in Northern Ireland.

If capital punishment were returned to Northern Ireland, I would radically change my views about policy for Northern Ireland. I do not believe in pulling out of Northern Ireland, but if there were capital punishment, I could no longer support staying there. I would not be prepared to say to the soldiers—many of whom come from my constituency and constituencies in the north of England and Scotland—"Go to Northern Ireland," because the reprisals would be enormous and would be based on the martyrdom of the past. There would have to be a complete reappraisal of policy in Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) told us the interesting story of what happened in the Republic in 1922-23, when 81 people, perhaps more, were executed by military tribunal—that is the origin of the two political parties in the south. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are born of the six counties and the 26 counties by the killing of 81 people—I thought the figure was 78. In the election in the south in 1978, chalked on the pavement was the figure 78. It was held against Fine Gael that it was the 26-county party that had initiated—I had better be careful what word I use—the deaths of those people. That was still remembered all those years later.

If our forces were not in Northern Ireland, I concede that similar action would have to be taken there. Regardless of legislation passed by the House, there would be killing because the hatreds born in the north of Ireland as a result of the activities of the provisiona IRA and others lie deep, but we do not know that here. We could have that view. I do not believe that a British Government could execute without trouble a Protestant, Catholic, Unionist or Loyalist—call them what one will. If we were not in Northern Ireland, the story of 1923 would be written again in the north.

The hon. Members representing both sides of the community in Northern Ireland represent a district where murder matters, where they see it and have heard about it for 20 years. The rest of us are different and that is why we are acting as we are. I could not possibly support capital punishment in Northern Ireland in particular or in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gale: The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) referred to the debate held in 1988, which I sponsored, and my amendment. He said that the motion referred to what he called a "local option", which was quite incorrect and a misrepresentation of the motion before the House in 1988. That motion sought to reintroduce capital punishment as the maximum available sentence for murder. It is correct that, at that time, it would have been left to the court and the judge to determine whether capital punishment was a suitable sentence. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has refined that motion and turned it into something more legally acceptable, and I shall most certainly support him tonight.

The argument in favour of the restoration of capital punishment must turn upon whether the House believes that for even a small number of murders, capital punishment is a deterrent. I believe that that is so, and for that reason alone I have consistently supported restoration and will continue to do so.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to the hopelessness of a life sentence. He said that it was a terrible punishment to inflict on a man or woman who had committed murder, which was why the Government recognised, and it was now on the statute book in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, that murder should be penalised by life sentence. I believe that the life sentence has made the task of our police force immeasurably more dangerous.

It is an absolute fact that, before the abolition of capital punishment, the professional criminal, as a matter of course, did not carry weapons. This afternoon we have heard anecdotal evidence about how the professional criminal would not only not carry a gun or a knife himself, but would search his colleagues before going out on a job to make sure that they were not "tooled up", because it was recognised that, if one used a weapon, all were liable and would face a capital sentence.

Since abolition, it is an absolute fact that the incidence of armed crime has risen dramatically. My argument in support of new clause 1 is simply that we have a stark option. It is no longer possible to ask the men and women of our police force to go out and face armed criminals when they themselves are unarmed. I do not believe that any hon. Member, from either side of the House, would ask a young soldier to go out in Northern Ireland and face the IRA without carrying a gun, but that is exactly what we are asking the men and women of our police force to do.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my hon. Friend recognise that there is an incentive for the armed robber to commit murder because, if he is arrested or confronted by an unarmed police officer who asks him to lay down his weapon, the criminal knows that, under existing sentencing policy, he is bound to get 20 years. Therefore, the incentive is for the criminal to shoot his way out of trouble.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—the incentive is there and I regret that it has been heightened by legislation passed by this Government. The last Criminal Justice Act and successive Home Secretaries have made it clear that the murderer will face life imprisonment, so the murderer carrying a gun has no disincentive to use it.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is clear from the evidence of recent cases that the criminals concerned went out armed with an arsenal of weapons and with every intention of using them? That is so clear that it is extraordinary that it has been suggested in this debate that robbers go out with guns but with no intention of using them.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend makes the point more succinctly than I could have done.

If I—as I do—believe that we can no longer ask the men and women of the police to go out, unarmed, and face armed criminals, the choice before my right hon. Friend is to acknowledge either that we must afford the police the maximum possible protection and the deterrent of capital punishment, or that we must arm our police. It is as stark as that. I find the latter wholly unacceptable, and that leads me inevitably to the former.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) rested his case principally on the predicament of the police and of our soldiers in Northern Ireland—a theme that has run through several of our debates. I prefer the view of the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), who speaks with great authority as a former Secretary of State both of Northern Ireland and for the Home Department. He rightly drew attention to the views of Lord Whitelaw who, when in a position of responsibility, spoke forcefully about his change of mind:

"I am . . . absolutely convinced . . .that in the days immediately before and after any proposed execution the police and the soldiers would be at increased risk. As a result, the effort to protect the lives of policemen and soldiers by making an example in the case of a death which cannot be reprieved would be likely to provoke more shooting and more risk of death than to reduce it."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1973; Vol. 856, c. 1029.]

Admittedly, this is anecdotal evidence, but of a kind that has commended itself to every Secretary of State for Northern Ireland since the troubles started in 1969. We could almost begin and end the debate with Northern Ireland, because, if it is not possible for these reasons to espouse capital punishment in Northern Ireland, then for what crimes can we espouse it?

As long ago as 1953, Sir Ernest Gower's Royal Commission on capital punishment pointed to the extraordinary multiplicity of crimes that go under the name of murder:

"There is perhaps no single class of offences that varies so widely both in character and in culpability as the class comprising those which may fall within the comprehensive common law definition of murder."

Few of us would regard any crime as more culpable than that of terrorism. If, for the practical reasons that have commended themselves to successive Secretaries of State, we are debarred from invoking capital punishment in terrorist cases, we are driven by logic and by the difficulty of these moral connections to the view that we must exclude capital punishment for all murders.

It is strange that we have returned to this debate yet again. We last considered it within the lifetime of this Parliament, and we decided, comprehensively and by a very large majority, that the case, which has been considered about 15 times since capital punishment was abolished, had not substantially changed. Of course it is right to reconsider these matters when public opinion is persistent in believing that capital punishment offers some way out of the problem of serious crime and of murder in particular, but I fear that the public, in espousing this commitment to capital punishment, may be looking for an easy answer to a very difficult problem.

7.15 pm

I accept the Home Secretary's analysis that the evidence of deterrence is inconclusive. Those who seek to argue that we should reintroduce capital punishment must discharge the onus of proof. The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) attempted to do that, I thought unconvincingly, by referring to a number of articles about the American experience. I thought that the Home Secretary had already demolished that argument quite effectively, by looking at examples of American states that have retained or reinstated capital punishment and comparing them with those that have not, following the 10-year gap in its use. I am sure that he drew the right conclusion: that the evidence does not support the view that capital punishment is a uniquely effective deterrent.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton did not rest his case only on deterrence. He also invoked the argument of retribution—heard perhaps not so commonly in this House but often outside it. For my part, I regard retribution as a matter for the Divinity, not for the legislature of this country.

I also find it hard to accept that those of us who have objections, not only of the practical kind that I have mentioned but also of principle, to capital punishment should be asked to bend our consciences a little to accept it in certain cases, some of which are set out in the new clauses. It is not as though we have no experience of trying to operate with categories of murder, drawing distinctions between moral turpitude of one sort or another. The Homicide Act 1957 ran for long enough to bring that notion into disrepute, and materially contributed to the abolition of capital punishment.

Who can say that murder using explosives or firearms is morally more culpable than a long-planned poisoning for gain? But such a distinction could be the consequence of accepting at least one of the new clauses. It is impossible to draw up these nice categories and to apply capital punishment to some of them but not to others.

Perhaps the newest argument advanced by those who want to reintroduce capital punishment relates to the proposal in new clause 4—that we should pass the ultimate decision from this House, and even from a jury, to the Court of Appeal. Capital punishment would be exacted in most cases—this was the burden of the speech by the hon. and learned Member for Burton—but the Court of Appeal would have the right—indeed, the duty—to intervene and assess the evidence again. That is a strange proposition, bearing in mind the part that the court played in the Guildford cases, which must have given rise to some doubt about its suitability for a role of this sort, even if it wanted it. The Court of Appeal would not have heard the evidence which led the jury to convict. It would not have heard the witnesses and would have no sense of the trial. It would be quite wrong to impose upon a group of judges the duty of making a life-or-death decision.

I was surprised to learn from the Home Secretary that the Lord Chief Justice has categorically stated his view, and that it does not contain the kind of qualifications suggested by the hon. and learned Member for Burton. The Lord Chief Justice has said that it would be inappropriate for judges to exercise that sort of discretion, and I take it that that is also the view of his fellow judges.

It is bound to be a discretion. The hon. and learned Member for Burton says that it is Parliament that would have decided, but judges would have to exercise a discretion in life-and-death cases and it is not appropriate for us to ask them to do that. In 1953, the Royal Commission on capital punishment considered that proposition and was strongly against it. The Commission's report stated:

"The responsibility of deciding whether a person convicted of murder should be sentenced to death or to a lesser punishment is too heavy a burden to be inflicted on any single individual. The sentence of death differs absolutely, not in degree, from any other sentence and it would be wholly inconsistent with our traditional approach to such issues to lay on the shoulders of the judge a responsibility so grave and invidious."

That has always been the case in this country. There have been variations of the extent to which capital punishment has been applied, but in modern times they have added nothing to the variability of the judges.

The new clause tabled by the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) raises new issues. As some hon. Members have said, that new clause is a welcome innovation, because it has brought to our attention the anomaly of the retention of capital punishment for treason and piracy. The repeal of capital punishment for those crimes should not depend on a review of the substance of the law. If we are persuaded, as I think most hon. Members are, of the inappropriateness of capital punishment, we need not wait for the decision of the Law Commission on the review of the substantive law.

In an intervention during the Home Secretary's speech, I said that the codification of the criminal law, to which he had referred, is a task to which the Law Commission set its hand a long time ago and effectively completed. As the law rolls on, and as Parliament intervenes to amend the law, the task of updating that work of codification remains and will continue. The Committee has not been asked to give effect to the findings of the Law Commission on codification. No one could pretend for a minute that such matters are pressing. In future, they will simply slip out of the Home Secretary's action tray.

I regret that the Home Secretary concluded his speech on a depressing and negative note, because the rest of his speech was entirely in accordance with the views of most Home Secretaries since 1965 and reflected his careful consideration of whether the settled mind of Parliament should be shaken by new factors. In this matter, Parliament's mind is settled, and there is no case for continual reconsideration of the issue. *[Interruption.]* I have had an experience which I do not think the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) has had. One of my opponents at the last general election stood with the sole intention of demonstrating the strength of feeling about capital punishment. That independent candidate attracted 686 votes.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I shall give way when I have finished my point.

Mr. Boyes: The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has only been here for 10 seconds.

Mr. Maclennan: The hon. Lady's views are well known, and she has intervened already. I shall be delighted to let her intervene again.

Some people hold a strong view on the issue, and that was reflected in those 686 votes in my constituency. We must decide the issue ourselves, not by reference to popular opinion polls or plebiscites. We have been sent here to represent our constituents and to do our best in their interests as we conceive them.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: With the exception of the last 10 minutes, I have been here for the whole debate.

I may well have had an experience that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has not had. After capital punishment had been abolished, I was defending a man charged with a particularly unpleasant murder of which he was subsequently convicted. Because capital punishment had been abolished, he was not very concerned about whether he would be convicted. If capital punishment had still been in force, he would have said to me, "I didn't do it, Miss." However, when I went to see him in his cell, I was staggered when he said to me, "I want two ounces of Cut Golden Bar, 10 Craven A cork tipped and a paper with the latest racing results." He would not have said that if capital punishment had been in force.

Mr. Maclennan: Hon. Members can consider whether the hon. Lady has strengthened her case by that intervention.

The main argument that must weigh with the Committee in reconsidering the issue is the fallibility of human judgment, the evidence that is presently in our minds that juries have made mistakes which, had the law remained as it was prior to 1965, would have resulted in innocent men being hanged. That is an overwhelming argument against reversing the settled view of Parliament.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: The general sentiment that I have taken from the debate on this serious issue is that most hon. Members seem to think that those who spoke before them spoke for far too long. I shall be brief, because I know that many of my hon. Friends wish to take part in the debate.

Hon. Members have said that having another debate on the issue is a bit of a nuisance. They say that we have decided on the matter and that there is not much point in debating it further. We have to impress on those who are opposed to capital punishment that the argument cannot go away, because on the basis of firm evidence many of us feel that innocent lives are being put at risk almost every day because there is no effective deterrent.

Secondly, many of believe that the law in its present state is such that some determined criminals, especially armed criminals, almost have an incentive to use their weapons if they are caught on a job. No judicial system can prevent murder, but I and many reasonable people are convinced that the evidence clearly shows that many people could be deterred from committing murder.

We have heard a great deal about people's views of the evidence and we have heard their assessment of the situation in America. I appeal to those who have doubts

about the clarity of the evidence to look at the splendid paper produced by the House of Commons Library. Page 9 is astonishingly clear and precise. It shows that, between 1945 and 1964, the year before abolition, there was not an increase but a reduction in the annual rate of murders from 346 to 296, and that from the moment when capital punishment was abolished, there was a sharp increase in the rate of murder. Those are not my opinions: they are clear, established facts.

One can look at the figures in certain ways. One can look at convictions, which would be misleading because there might be more conviction when we had capital punishment than there were after its abolition. However, when one considers the number of bodies—the number of murders made known—the situation seems clear.

7.30 pm

Mr. Rees: After the abolition of capital punishment, the classification of murder and manslaughter were changed, by virtue of the courts, so the hon. Gentleman may not be comparing like with like.

Mr. Taylor: I have the greatest of respect for the right hon. Gentleman, but it does not matter how one classifies murders or manslaughters. I have here a table of the number of bodies—the number of people who have been killed—and the categories include manslaughter, infanticide and murder. The position is clear. The opponents of capital punishment cannot deny that total. From almost the moment of abolition, the number of bodies increased sharply.

I challenge those who say that there is no evidence to explain why it was that, in the 20 years after the second world war, when there was plenty of uncertainty in life, including plenty of unemployment, we had a stable or reducing murder rate. Why was it that, after that, under Conservative and Labour Governments, when there was more prosperity, there was a sharp rise from under 300 a year in that 20-year period to 650 murders a year in the next 20 years?

There is another piece of evidence that we cannot ignore. I appeal to those who are opposed to capital punishment to explain to me and to people outside why there has been an enormous increase in the use of guns in the commission of crime. It is not just a marginal figure of 10 or 20 per cent. We know that, with capital punishment, criminals in Britain rarely carried guns, but since abolition, guns have been used for quite petty offences. We are talking of enormous increases of hundreds of per cent.

I hope that nobody will say that the figures for the murder of police are not relevant. The figures are clear. In the 25 years before abolition, 22 police officers were killed but in the 25 years since abolition, 53 police officers have been killed—a doubling of the figure. People may look at Japan and the evidence there for certain years in different categories, but the evidence is clear. For us, since we abolished capital punishment, there has been a sharp and sudden alteration in the situation.

The one argument that must haunt every supporter of capital punishment, and the one argument from which we cannot run away, is that of the possibility of a mistake. Is there a likelihood that an innocent person could be hanged? However, even though that is desperately important, we must not forget that, since abolition, 59 people have been murdered by someone who has already been in prison to serve a sentence for homicide. We do not know what category they would be in.

Another factor may arise in such cases. I have studied carefully the case of poor Timothy Evans. Although it appears from the evidence that he did not murder the person whom he was convicted of murdering, there is evidence that he may have killed somebody else.

However we look at the figures, I ask hon. Members to think about the matter in terms of defence policy. I was amazed to hear the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and even our delightful and splendid Home Secretary talking about the dangers to society of treating individuals in such a way. What on earth are they doing supporting our defence policy? Why do we have these terrible bombs, rockets and atomic weapons which can fry people alive, vaporise them or give them devastating long-term illnesses, and which cost so much money? We have them because we want to save life and we want to deter. These chaps are out in the Gulf now to deter war.

I accept that it is important that we show great humanity in all we do, but it makes me think that there is something very strange when people who support defence policy to the hilt, remembering that pilots can make mistakes, bombs can drop in the wrong place and innocent people may be killed, change their ideas with capital punishment.

I hope that hon. Members will support new clause 5. In it, I have tried to identify clearly those who can be deterred. If someone is carrying a weapon, he should not be, as he should not be carrying explosives, or going out with a clearly defined offensive weapon. Those who might kill a police officer or a prison officer can be deterred. My new clause has tried to deter such people and to leave the judge an escape clause if he feels that there are extenuating circumstances.

Hon. Members are trying to kid themselves when they say that there is no evidence. The evidence is as clear as anything. Some Ministers at Conservative party conferences have tried to explain how well things are going on the basis of figures that are difficult to interpret. Those figures make the argument clearer than do many of the figures that I have heard quoted at Conservative or, dare I say it, Labour party conferences. We all know that if we do not agree to the reintroduction of capital punishment we shall, as a Parliament, deliberately be sentencing some innocent people to die. For that reason, we should support reintroduction.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I shall try to be brief because I realise that many hon. Members still wish to speak and it is important that they speak in this important debate.

I shall concentrate on two points. The first is concerned not with Ireland or the situation in Northern Ireland but with Britain, because I happen to believe that the loss of human life is a tragedy whether the person is killed in Northern Ireland, Birmingham, Glasgow, or wherever. We are talking here about how we best express, through legislation, our regard for the sanctity of human life and for that which will protect the life of those who are charged with enforcing the law and those who happen to break it. The responsibility of society for those who break the law is as great as it is for those who enforce the law.

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

It is morally wrong, publicly and through legislation, to take away a person's life. It debases the legislation that allows it to happen. One of our problems in relation to the spill-over from terrorism not just in Northern Ireland but throughout the world is that it has comprised the law. Legislation has danced to the terrorists' tune. The Acts that the House has passed in the past five or 10 years show that the integrity of the law has been debased by the very people to whom we are addressing our message.

One cannot defeat terrorism by the use of more stringent law. If it could have been done in that way, the problems of Northern Ireland would have been over long ago. Instead of damaging terrorism, it has damaged the law and people should be aware of that. Sooner or later, the Northern Ireland problem will be over—sooner, we all hope. The British system of law will have to be put together again and, if we agree to the new clauses, the ultimate sufferers might be people here who will have sacrificed what was an excellent system, based on the highest integrity, to pursue something that cannot be achieved by those methods.

Capital punishment also dehumanises the society within which it is used. It uses the method of the terrorist because it takes the brutality of vengeance and violence, which are the hallmarks of the terrorist, and puts them into the court room and legislation. That debasing and dehumanising element is one that can become greater.

When I heard about Japan's approach to these matters, I was astounded. What we heard about that country is not good. However Japan's approach is quantified in material terms, such legislation will lead to its ultimate detriment. Alarm bells should ring in this country. It is not so long ago that we saw what stemmed from Japan when the ethic of violence existed throughout its entire body corporate. As we all know, the results were horrific. The conclusions that the Japanese have appeared to draw could rebound on the very values that we want to protect and retain. We should be extremely wary about drawing the same conclusions.

There is another reason why we should consider these matters clearly and with compassion within the Irish element. Many mistakes have been made. One of those mistakes was made in 1916, when people were executed. The poet, William Butler Yeats, summed up the situation better than most when he wrote

"All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty was born."

That was not because a few men took over the general post office in Dublin and started a shooting war. It was because they were executed. As Padraig Pearse said at the funeral of O'Donavan Rossa:

"The fools: the fools: they have left us our Fenian dead."

That martyrdom is the most potent factor within Republicanism in Ireland and always has been. To argue now that we should introduce martydrom by reintroducing capital punishment is bad law and extremely faulty thinking.

References have been made to Albert Brown. I agree with the decision not to execute him. If it had not been taken, it would have been impossible to control Belfast at that time. It would be impossible to control parts of Northern Ireland if a Republican were executed now. That applies to the Protestant community and the Catholic community. It would be deeply wrong if such an execution were to take place. Lives would be lost—lives are always being lost in Northern Ireland—but something that is perhaps much more important would be lost, too—the ability to retain or sustain any semblance of peace or stability.

Once that happened, the complexion of all that is happening in the north of Ireland would change. It would not change in the way that many Members of this place may wish it to change. In such circumstances the north of Ireland would become completely ungovernable, no matter what laws the Government of the day passed, no matter what army they had and no matter what force they were prepared to use. The change would be to the detriment of us all. We must never consider reintroducing capital punishment in Northern Ireland. If the House of Commons ever decided to do so, there would be enormous suffering for the entire community, and the results would be counter-productive.

We have heard much about the execution of 80 people when the Irish Republic was in its infant days. Please let us not make a virtue out of that. It would be wrong to do so. Those who undertook the execution of the 80 were killing British soldiers only a few weeks before as they then fought against the British presence. No great virtue should be attributed to those who undertook the executions. They did not become involved because of decisions that were made in the courts. They carried out the executions as a result of the decisions of insidious military kangaroo courts.

I happen to know something about the executions, because one of my relatives was a victim. That is Irish history. Irish history has not come to an end because of some of the things that have happened. Do we want more executions to take place? Do we want to draw political or legal conclusions from something of that sort, which was entirely illegal in any terms? We surely cannot draw any conclusions from such events.

7.45 pm

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) drew an entirely spurious conclusion when he said that the IRA had not been able to function properly in the Republic of Ireland since the executions. That is wrong. Whatever stringent methods were adopted—the actions taken were wrong and illegal—they were implemented by Irish people. The actions taken were not replicated in the north of Ireland because that was not a new, emerging Irish nation. In Northern Ireland the forces of Britain remained. That is why the decisions of the Republic were not taken in the north of Ireland. The right decision overall was taken in the north of Ireland, but whether that was for the right reasons is another matter.

Capital punishment is not a deterrent. I do not want to draw any conclusions from cases that are pending. I have expressed my views on those cases on several occasions in the Chamber. I leave what I think is the most pertinent observation on the Guildford Four decision, and what I hope will be the right decision in respect of the Birmingham Six, to the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). On 24 October 1989, in the context of the Guildford Four, *The Guardian* reported the right hon. Gentleman as saying:

"My immediate reaction to Guildford was that this puts the kibosh on capital punishment . . . I was in favour of its retention. It took this case to tell me, 'Look. Pause. Reflect. What if they hanged innocent people?'"

Those are the words, as I have said, of the Father of the House. He said that he had always been in favour of capital punishment, but that people should pause, look and reflect.

Mr. Shersby: As the Committee knows, I am the parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. It is right that I should declare that interest in speaking in support of the provisions that are set out in new clause 1. My remarks will be confined to that new clause, which concerns the murder of a police officer in the execution of his duty.

Although I have the outside interest that I have declared, I wish to make it clear that my purpose is to express what I believe is the view of a large majority of my constituents, as well as that of the police in the federated ranks. The view is that, if Parliament and the people of our country have a claim on the police to protect them and to risk their lives on their behalf, the police have a claim, and a special one, on Parliament for protection. That claim is for a penalty which would deter all those who would consider killing a policeman to avoid the consequences of their crime.

It is the view of many police officers to whom I have talked that the penalty which would achieve that end is a capital sentence. That has been confirmed by recent surveys of members of the federation. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, who referred to the federation this afternoon, will take account of that.

This is not a debate about hanging. We are debating whether the state is prepared to take the life of those who kill in the course of crime, by whatever method is considered the most humane in the closing years of the century.

As we heard form my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), it is a matter of fact that, in the quarter of a century that has elapsed since the abolition of the ultimate penalty, the number of police officers murdered has more than doubled. In recent years the Police Federation, at its central conference—which is attended by some 2,000 officers—has called for the restoration of the death penalty for persons convicted of murder. That will be of particular interest to the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), who speaks on police matters. There has been no attempt to establish different categories, in which some murderers would be liable to execution and others not, because, in the period before abolition, when the law made such distinctions and anomalies, the position was most unsatisfactory.

The position is different today. The Police Federation supports new clause 1, which would restore the death penalty for the murder of police officers. That is based on the experience of three attempts to establish special deterrents for armed criminals as an alternative to capital punishment. All those attempts have failed and, in practice, there is no difference between the maximum penalty for the armed criminal who kills a citizen in the course of a crime, or one who wounds someone, or one who fires a weapon, or even one who carries a firearm. Both the Government and the House have, on each occasion, recognised the very serious nature of a crime involving the use of firearms, but there is little concrete evidence to suggest that the increased penalties have had any real deterrent effect. On the contrary, there has been an inexorable rise in the commission of crimes by armed criminals. There can be no hon. Member who is not aware of that.

I wish briefly to cite an example. On 13 April 1989, two armed robbers were shot dead in a shoot-out with police after an attempted raid on a post office in Rayners lane, West Harrow, which is only a couple of miles from my constituency of Uxbridge. Police called on the men to stop, but they did not do so. As a result, between 20 and 30 shots were fired in the gun battle that followed in a quiet, suburban, English street. The men fired on the police, using a Colt 45 pistol, a Luger automatic pistol and a sawn-off shotgun—a deadly armoury of weapons.

One of the robbers killed had just been released from prison, having been sentenced to 17 years for armed robbery. So much for the deterrent penalty of a long sentence. He had escaped from Chelmsford prison in 1971 while serving 13 years for robbery and possession of firearms. Another dead robber had served several years for kidnapping a bank manager in the 1970s. What nice people. It is clear that prison sentences did not deter those men from carrying and using firearms in the commission of a crime—not even 17 years in one case.

In extending sympathy to the relatives of the dead robbers, the acting deputy assistant commissioner said:

"I have to say that we are dealing with a hard core of ruthless and sophisticated criminals."

He said that those who armed themselves to shoot at the police would "face the inevitable consequences." Those armed robbers were not deterred by prison sentences, and they could be prevented from shooting the police only by the police returning fire. Because of the skill of the police, no innocent bystander was injured or killed, but the risk was there, and it had to be taken. It will have to be taken again and again and again unless Parliament resolves to deter those ruthless men.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. Friend is making a clear statement of the increasing dangers and risks that our police face at a time of rising violent crime. Whatever may be felt in the Committee, there is no doubt about the apprehension that is felt outside it. If nothing is done and the trend continues, is it my hon. Friend's conclusion and that of the police who safeguard the public that, sooner or later, the police will have to be armed? What will be Parliament's answer to that?

Mr. Shersby: My right hon. Friend has raised an important point, which I shall deal with in a moment.

Hon. Members may remember that, only a matter of days ago, in a quiet Surrey suburb of Woodhatch, another armed robber was shot dead as his gang tried to hijack a security van thought to contain £1 million in cash. Again, the PT17 squad returned fire when under attack from the criminals. The police seized a veritable arsenal of guns, including a sawn-off shotgun, a revolver and two self-loading pistols. Can any hon. Member honestly say that those men took those weapons with them simply to give themselves a sense of security? Of course not—they were prepared to shoot and kill if they were caught.

Hon. Members should not show any sympathy towards those who engage in such premeditated crime and who will kill, kill and kill again to resist arrest. Were those men deterred by the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which increased from 14 years to life imprisonment the penalty for possessing a firearm or imitation firearm when committing a crime or having been arrested for

[Mr. Shersby]

criminal intent? Of course not. Parliament took that step after the most careful consideration, but raising the penalty from 14 years to life imprisonment did not stop such men, and it will not stop others.

There can be no doubt that the job of a police officer in protecting the public—protecting us—is much more dangerous than it was in 1965, when the death penalty was abolished. The result, not sought by the police but caused by the stark reality of the position, has been to transform the police service from one that was almost wholly unarmed—a point made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary—to one in which firearms are part of the standard equipment of every force.

Whether we like it or not, hundreds of police officers are trained and authorised to use firearms. Many officers, such as those engaged in specialist duties, have to carry them regularly. Is that what hon. Members want? I think not. Is that what the law-abiding citizen wants? I am certain that it is not. Is that what the average police officer wants? I can assure the House that it is not.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale said, it has now become clear to the leaders of the Police Federation, 25 years after the abolition of the death penalty, that there is a significant change in the attitude of police officers to the carrying of firearms on duty. From the almost unanimous position taken a few years ago, there is now a small but significant body of police opinion, especially among the younger officers, that the regular arming of the police is inevitable.

We need only look across the channel to France, where the carrying of sidearms is a fact of life, as it is in Spain, Germany and many other countries. It will be a fact of life in Britain before very long. The Police Federation very much hopes that that will not happen, but it cannot ignore current developments. Nor can we lightly dismiss the very real risks taken by unarmed police officers on our behalf.

I wish to deal with one important question. It has been said several times this evening that there is no conclusive evidence that capital punishment is a deterrent. That may be so, but we must make our judgment based not on statistics that any clever advocate can use to argue the case one way or another, but on the use of our intelligence and our own eyes to see what is happening.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): I know of the hon. Gentleman's close relationship with the Police Federation. Does he agree that we should also judge something in which the police have expressed interest—what our European partners do? As the hon. Gentleman knows, all our European partners have given up capital punishment. He knows that the sign of liberation—*[Interruption.]* I should like to make my point. As a sign of liberation and of the rise of democratic and decent values, eastern European countries get rid of the death penalty as soon as possible.

8 pm

Mr. Shersby: The hon. Gentleman makes his point forcefully but, as my hon. Friends have pointed out, all police officers in those European countries are armed, and they are prepared to use their weapons as and when necessary.

The moral question which we must consider is, does the state have the right to take the life of a citizen who murders a police officer in the execution of his duties—those officers whom we have appointed to protect us and the great British public? I suggest that the answer is yes.

If the Committee decides to reject new clause 1 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale and others, only one solution will be available to the Police Federation and its members. In Committee or on Report, several of my hon. Friends and I will table a further amendment calling for life imprisonment to mean imprisonment for the rest of an individual's natural life.

That is a little different from the situation described by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. It would mean that no Home Secretary would ever have the ability to release, after a long period in prison, any individual who had been convicted. I put it to the Committee that there is a powerful argument for that measure, because successive Home Secretaries have told the House that they will not release those who kill a police officer in the execution of his duty. I see no objection to putting that provision into statute so that at least the police can be assured that the House of Commons supports them in their difficult job and that, if we are not prepared to restore capital punishment, at the very least anyone who kills a police officer in the execution of his duty will never again be free to do so.

Sir Charles Irving (Cheltenham): I am grateful to you, Miss Boothroyd, for giving me a few minutes in which to speak in the Chamber. I do not take much of its time. I do not particularly enjoy speaking in it. I have spent 40 to 50 years in and out of prisons, and I have ended up here. The issue has been fully debated over the past 10 years and I have had the privilege to be called in every debate. I have with me the speeches in five major debates. If anyone would like a copy, I should be happy to sell one.

I have listened with great care and sympathy to those who take a totally different view to the one that I have held all my life, and I have no intention of changing it. In fact, it would be easier to change one's views than to go along with the crowd who would welcome hanging or whatever form of capital punishment is introduced. It is always easier to go with the throng, but I could not follow that course in any circumstances. Those of us who firmly believe in that view have a right to it just as much as other people have a right to the view that capital punishment should be reintroduced.

Over the years, as I have gone in and out of various prisons in England and America, I have seen men and women in the condemned cell. I have been there on the Friday night of the fry-up, when the electric chair was to be used. The atmosphere, the terror and the misery, not just in the condemned cell but throughout the whole prison, were absolutely appalling.

Mr. Janman: What about the terror of the victim?

Sir Charles Irving: One of my colleagues asks, "What about the victim?" I sympathise with the victim. I was probably the first in this country to think it prudent to have a victim support scheme, and I started one in Bristol. Much more is now being done to help victims than was ever done during the formative years of my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman). If he wants to speak, he should stand up.

There is no evidence in this or any other country that capital punishment is an effective deterrent. It simply leads to a coarsening of attitudes to human life. A 1965 royal

commission concluded that there was no deterrent effect. Recent surveys in the United States, where some states have the death penalty and some do not, show the same results.

Terrorists are even less likely to be deterred than other murderers. They are fanatics, seeing themselves as fighting a cause higher than themselves, holding their lives at a low price. In the stages leading up to an execution, terrorists would have a strong motive for taking hostages, threatening to kill them and to intimidate all taking part in a trial, especially jurors.

The fact that some supporters of capital punishment do not call for it in every case is an admission that it is not necessarily a deterrent. I find it particularly offensive to have a selection of whom one will or will not execute. We must not forget how difficult it was to differentiate between the types of murders that qualified for the death penalty under the Homicide Act 1957 and those that did not—poisoning and strangling were surely not notably morally better than shooting, but one carried the death penalty and the others did not.

Under the 1957 Act, the murder of a policeman was a capital offence, but the murder of security guards, bankers and post office workers was not, even though they were also at risk because of their employment. Murder in the course of theft was a capital offence, but not other murders for gain. The problem of distinguishing between capital and non-capital murder would inevitably prove intractable if done on a selective basis. For example, a policeman chasing someone armed with a gun may be joined by a member of the public. If the criminal turns and shoots the policeman, some would argue that he should be executed, but if he shoots the member of the public, he should not.

I accept that homicide rates have risen, and I sympathise with hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber who have expressed concern about the rise in violent crime. The published Home Office statistics include manslaughter and infanticide as well as murder. We cannot restore life to a man wrongly convicted and executed. There have been appalling miscarriages of justice in a land that prides itself on its rule of law and is the admiration of the world. But in the cases of Timothy Evans, the Guildford Four and many others, there is no pride in thinking what has happened in the name of justice.

The reintroduction of the death penalty would place an intolerable burden on the jury. There is evidence that juries would rather acquit than have on their conscience the responsibility for sending a man to the gallows who might ultimately be found not to have committed the offence. Some argue that juries should have the power to recommend life imprisonment in capital cases where there are mitigating circumstances. For the first time, that would place on the jury and not on the judge the function of influencing the sentence. If a husband poisons his wife because she is dying a painful death from an incurable illness, a jury in one place may find that evil and recommend the death penalty whereas, in another area, a different jury may find otherwise.

So many inconsistencies would arise from the proposals before the Committee. Suppose that a jury is allowed to make such a recommendation. Must it return a unanimous verdict? To do less would be to undermine the awesome nature of the punishment. If the verdict had to be unanimous, it would require only one juror who was opposed to capital punishment in conscience to refuse to convict for the trial to be stopped and the jury discharged. Would it be right for the accused to stand trial again, and again to fear for his life?

A far more constructive approach would be for certain categories of murderer to serve very long, determinate sentences with no parole. Personally, if I were in that position and had the choice, I should rather leave this world and go to a better one than serve a minimum of 20 years—perhaps 30—in prison, especially in the prisons that we have in Britain today, which are still a disgrace in Europe. One must congratulate the Home Office on doing its utmost, under extremely difficult circumstances, to improve the prisons, but there is a long way still to go.

There can be no longer sentence than a mandatory life sentence, which is a lifelong surrender of liberty. The existence of such a sentence would allow the Home Secretary, in deciding when a prisoner should be released —or whether he should not—to take into account the circumstances of the offence and the risk to the public. The Criminal Justice Bill proposes stricter criteria for the release of prisoners on parole, focusing on the risk of serious harm to the public. The proposed criteria make it likely that many offenders convicted of violent crime will not be released on parole.

I urge the Home Secretary—if that is necessary, and I do not believe that it is—to continue his predecessor's policy of requiring those responsible for the worst categories of murder to serve at least 20 years. I would include those who kill policemen or prison officers, those responsible for the sexual or sadistic murder of children, terrorist murderers and those who use guns to kill in the course of robbery. Some murderers should never be released. I believe that that point has been fully taken into account by the Home Secretary and his advisers already, without the need for any further discussion in the House. Of the 26 adults convicted of police murders since 1965, none has yet been released. Of the life sentence prisoners convicted of homicide since 1966, eight have been convicted of homicide offences while on licence.

The arguments against capital punishment are well known. They are so strong that they persuaded Parliament to abolish the death penalty in 1965. That has been confirmed by the House as the right decision every time that we have debated the issue since. This may well be my last speech before I retire. I hope that I shall find the vote acceptable.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am sure that the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) will not want me to follow him, as I take a completely different view from him. Nevertheless, we will be sorry to lose him. Perhaps if the hon. Gentleman will not change his mind about capital punishment, he will change his mind about his retirement and decide to stay among us. I take a different view because I have been in prison—not just as a visitor—and I know something of what prison life is like.

8.15 pm

There is a part of Irish history that hon. Members need to get in perspective. We have heard a worthy speech from the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), who was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and also served at the Home Office. The right hon. Gentleman gave his view—a Welsh view—of Irish history. We heard the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) give a different view. We heard the hon. Member

for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) give yet another view. I am entitled to put my view, and my view is a simple one. It has never been answered, and I urge those three right hon. and hon. Members to think about it.

In the south of Ireland, after the signing of the treaty, there was a similar situation to that which prevails in Northern Ireland today. Under De Valera, the irregulars were killing their own people. Fathers were set against sons and sons against fathers. Total catastrophe lay ahead for the Irish Free State. There came into office a man called Kevin O'Higgins. He knew what Irish republican terrorism was about because he had been brought up in the school. He knew that the only way to deal with it was to introduce capital punishment for anyone who held a weapon to do murder. He proceeded accordingly. What happened? Peace was established. De Valera disbanded the irregulars and went into politics and there was a great change in the Irish Free State, which started on the road to democracy. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Mullin: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman is not very concerned about the possibility of innocent people being convicted in the Guildford and Birmingham cases, but is he concerned about the four UDR men convicted in Armagh of a murder for which many people, including him, say they are not responsible? Would it trouble him if those people went to the gallows?

Rev. Ian Paisley: If the hon. Gentleman had studied my remarks about the Guildford Four, he would know that he has totally misrepresented my view.

Mr. Mullin: Tell us, then.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I shall develop my argument and, at the end of my speech, the hon. Gentleman will understand where I stand.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh painted his picture, saying that, if capital punishment came again in Northern Ireland, there would be an ungovernable, uncontrollable bloodbath. I heard similar speeches from members of the Social Democratic and Labour party when the hunger strikers died, the position would be uncontrollable and that the police and the Army would not be able to handle it. In other words, it would be curtains for everyone.

Many voices were raised in this House in an attempt to stop the hunger strikers. However, they continued with their hunger strikes, and they died. I do not know how many hon. Members could name those hunger strikers. Indeed, very few people on the streets of Belfast could name those hunger strikers. The real martyrs in Northern Ireland are the police officers, the Army personnel, the UDR men and all the innocent people who have been murdered there. They far exceed in number those other martyrs.

So far, 3,000 people have been killed and 30,000 have been maimed in Northern Ireland. Who are the martyrs? There are so many of them that the only people who weep after the funerals are the immediate family circle.

Let us consider what has been said in the debate. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made an amazing statement. He said that the state does not have the right to take a life. If we believe that, we do not believe in the Army and we do not believe in those policemen who are trained to shoot. When those policemen face criminals or terrorists, they shoot and there will be killings, because it is impossible for them to shoot to maim. People are going to be killed, and the House should be aware that the state has the right to take away a life.

I recall a debate on this subject when I first came to the House 20 years ago. At that time, an Opposition Member said that no Christian could believe in capital punishment.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): No real Christian.

Rev. Ian Paisley: All right, no real Christian.

I asked that Opposition Member whether he thought that the Apostle Paul was a Christian and he said he did. Paul said that, if he had committed a crime worthy of death, he "refused not to die". The Apostle Paul believed in capital punishment. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) who used to attend meetings in Europe with me, will agree that the Apostle Paul was a real Christian.

I believe in the Christian philosophy of Government. The state has the power of the sword. The Government have an ordinance of God to deal with the evildoer and to defend those who do well. I believe with all my heart that the state has the power under God and under a system of justice to execute someone who takes away another person's life. I am not distinguishing between people now: I believe in capital punishment for all who commit murder.

The majority of hon. Members are not living under the conditions that exist in Northern Ireland. They do not follow the coffins or try to help the widows and orphans. That is the daily lot of all of us in Northern Ireland, of all classes and creeds. I represent the whole of Northern Ireland in another place. I know how the votes were cast under proportional representation, and I know the number of Roman Catholics who voted for me. I sympathise with them, and I know that the tears of a Roman Catholic mother are the same as the tears of the Protestant mother. I know, because I have been to their homes. Letters have appeared in the press in Northern Ireland stating that I have visited those places. When that young women was murdered at Warrenpoint, I was one of the first politicians to visit her home.

Those people who are suffering are calling on this House to do something. The prime weapon in the terrorist's armoury is to kill. They have that great weapon. They shoot to kill. Unless Parliament wakes up to the fact that we have to have the supreme deterrent to tell the terrorists that if they kill, they will be killed, the murders will continue.

I regret what the Home Secretary said tonight and I also regret what has been said by the chiefs of police. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), who is the spokesman for the Police Federation of Northern Ireland, is not here tonight to give the federation's official view that it is in favour of capital punishment. The spokesman for the Police Federation of England and Wales has put that view here tonight. I know that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone does not believe in capital punishment, but he should have been here to put the official view to the House. The Police Federation of Northern Ireland represents the policemen who are suffering and being murdered, and they believe that they need that deterrent.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Does my hon. Friend agree that the widows and orphans in Northern Ireland will find not one crumb of comfort from many of

tonight's speeches? If the House refuses to take a definite stand against the murderers who have struck in one part of the United Kingdom, the only folk who will find any comfort in Northern Ireland are the terrorists, who will know that the House is not willing to do the job that it should do—to defend the innocent.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I agree with my colleague.

I have been a Member of this place for 20 years. I recall that Frank Macguire was elected as hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. He only came to the House on special occasions, but he always attended when there were votes on capital punishment. I asked him why he came here on those occasions, and he used to tell me, "You know the pressures that I would face if I was not here to vote against capital punishment." Those pressures came from the Provisional IRA.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): The House has a duty to listen with special care to what Northern Ireland Members have to say about this issue. Whether or not we agree with them, they are in the most literal sense in the firing line and it is absolutely right that they should express their views with clarity and force. I believe that the idea that every person who commits murder should be executed goes far beyond the bounds of anything that has been suggested so far. I do not believe that much support could be found for that proposition anywhere in the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), in his strongly felt speech, told us that it was two and a half years since we last debated the subject and he felt that it was high time that we debated it once again. I must confess that it does not seem like two and a half years since we last debated it and when I learned of the debate, my first reaction was to say, "Oh, not again." It seemed pointless to go once more through the debate and the votes that will be similar to those that occurred on the previous occasions.

I consoled myself by thinking that the impact of these repeated debates and repeated votes would make the public recognise that Parliament will not change its mind on the issue. Many people might regret that, but there is a growing awareness outside this place that continuing these debates is a little barren.

When I counted my correspondence about this debate, I found one letter in favour of reintroducing capital punishment and one against. There is clearly a change of attitude among the public on the issue. Nevertheless, although an abolitionist, I have always thought carefully about the arguments that make up the subject of our debate. Two aspects in particular have made me think most carefully. One is deterrence and the other is terrorism. It is in those respects that the argument must be reheased most carefully.

I am not one of those who dismiss the notion that deterrence can have an effect in penal concept. By and large, criminals are often more rational, or at least calculating, than some people are prepared to accept. If one looks at the literature, as I have tried to do, one will see that—although the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) seemed to be inclined to the opposite view—there is no clear-cut picture showing that deterrence simply does not work.

8.30 pm

Perhaps the most balanced and authoritative assessment that I can find was by the doyen of British criminologists, Nigel Walker, in his book "Crime and Criminology". He said:

> "Naive beliefs both in the effectiveness and in the ineffectiveness of a policy of deterrence have been replaced by the less exciting realisation that for some length of time some people can be deterred in some situations from some types of conduct by some estimation of likelihood that they will be penalised in some ways; but that we do not yet know enough to enable us to be very specific about the time, the people, the situation, the conduct, or the subjective likelihood or nature of the penalties."

That is very far from a clarion call, but it is a fair assessment of our state of knowledge about the impact of deterrence, and we should recognise it as such.

It follows that it is very clear that the onus of proof lies with those who wish to change the present situation and move back to capital punishment. It is for them clearly to make out the case that the reintroduction of capital punishment would have a deterrent effect. I do not believe that they have been able to do so in this debate. I have never denied that there may be some cases in which a murder might not have taken place had we had capital punishment, but, overall, the argument must still be made strongly to move away from our present situation. Deterrence needs careful thought.

The other matter that needs careful thought is that of terrorists. It is not true that all terrorists are fanatically oblivious of the risk of death. After all, they do not carry bombs on to aircraft on which they themselves are flying. The whole basis of aircraft security is that proposition. We must also accept that, in Northern Ireland, the criminal law is finding it hard to deal with terrorism. We have had some interesting discussion about the experience of the 1920s. The hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) argued that the execution by the Irish free state of a large number of IRA members had a deterrent effect that lasted for years. However, against that, we heard the views of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). Those are important and difficult arguments to make.

Against that, I firmly believe that, whatever we think about those points, other potent arguments should lead us to say that the restitution of capital punishment would be a great disaster. The first must be the possibility of error. At this stage, nothing much can be added to what has been said about the possibility of error. However, it has become vivid over the years that people have been convicted and that they would have been sentenced to hang, and we now know for certain that they did not commit those crimes.

Even if some people would have been deterred from murder because of the threat of capital punishment, we must set that against the innocent people, or at least the people whose cases have not been adequately proven, if we are to make a fair judgment. I simply do not believe that public opinion, however initially sympathetic it may be to the idea of bringing back capital punishment, would welcome a succession of occasions on which mistakes of that gravity were made. If we refer back a generation, the Timothy Evans affair had a devastating effect on capital punishment at the time. Inescapably, the Guildford affair and those of other people who have been wrongly convicted would mean that public opinion simply would not tolerate the conviction of people who are not guilty.

Mr. Janman: It it not the case that the reverse applies? The vast majority—99·99 per cent.—of convictions would be accurate. It certainly would not be the case that the public would see a succession of wrongful convictions. If the argument of my right hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) is correct, jurors are even more careful to make sure that, when they convict of murder, the evidence is absolutely clear. Surely, even compared with the 1950s and 1960s, that would reduce even more the chances of wrongful convictions.

Mr. Raison: Jurors are as careful as they possibly can be. It cannot be argued that they have been light-hearted in their approach to such matters. The impact of even a limited number of cases in which convictions have proved unsound would be of devastating effect. As I said, that was so in the case of Timothy Evans. It is perhaps the strongest single argument.

There are also arguments about practicalities. When one mentions practicalities, one is talking not only about technical details, but about matters of major substance. The first is who would ultimately decide whether somebody should be executed. That question has recurred in the debate. Should it be the jury, the judges or the Home Secretary? Somebody must make the decision. Already, new clause 3 has been shot to pieces by the position of the Lord Chief Justice and by the common sense of a situation in which one is asking the justices of the Court of Appeal to make decisions when many of them would come to those decisions with a passionate disbelief in the rightness of capital punishment. It would be an appalling burden to put on to those judges.

At the same time, there is inherent in new clause 3 the idea of an instant retrial. The new clause includes the notion of a special sitting of the Court of Appeal which would be allowed to look at matters which had not been considered in the original trial. That is an extraordinary idea. I can see why it would sometimes be necessary, after the passage of time, but to have it as an instant sequel to those cases would be very difficult. It would pose tremendous problems for the Home Secretary to carry the decision. Many of our Home Secretaries have been strongly opposed to capital punishment.

In every respect, those arguments are most difficult. There is then the matter, which I shall not embellish, of who would carry out the execution, and how. Tremendous problems flow from that.

We must recognise the prospect of an appalling, morbid, bizarre public interest in the sequence of events. We have seen on television American criminals in death cells. I do not think that that would necessarily happen here, but there would be a tremendous hyping-up. Our popular newspapers would go to town in the most lurid way. There would be demonstrations and pickets, and possibly public disorder. We should not be blackmailed by such activity, but it would create a climate that would make it extremely difficult in practice to carry out more than a few such executions.

Mr. Wilshire: My right hon. Friend says that we should not be blackmailed by the arguments. Does he accept that it might not be blackmail and that it might be a very good thing not to allow that to happen? We could be looking at blood lust and the dehumanising of society rather than being put under pressure to opt for capital punishment. I do not think that we should be apologetic. I hope that my right hon. Friend will agree with me.

Mr. Raison: I come to the same conclusion as my hon. Friend. Capital punishment in the modern world would be deeply repellent in many ways.

There is also the difficult question of what would be deemed capital murder. Two of the new clauses propose that the killing of a police or prison officer should be deemed sufficient to bring back capital punishment. I find it hard to accept that the law enforcement services should be singled out in that way. We owe a tremendous amount to them—I owe a tremendous amount to the police in my constituency and have great respect for them—but it does not make sense to pick out one group in the population. Let us consider, for example, a bank robbery in which both a Securicor guard and a policeman were shot dead. The killer of one would be liable to execution, but the killer of the other would not. If that sort of nonsense happened, it would tear apart the proposition we are considering.

I do not believe that the police themselves are strongly committed to that proposition. It is not for me to quarrel with my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby), who ably represents the Police Federation, but I am absolutely certain that many policemen in this country would dislike the idea that they and they alone should receive that special protection. That proposition is no more sustainable than the argument that it is worse for a service man to be killed in war than a civilian.

Finally, we return not to questions of formal logic or rationalisation, but to one's own profound beliefs in the kind of society and world for which one is working. These are the things that are hardest to put into words. One knows what one believes and one knows that, with equal conviction, honesty and sincerity, others believe the opposite. However, to take the step of bringing back on to the statute book the execution of those who have committed murder would be to retreat from the peaceable kingdom that we want to see. Therefore, I hope that the House will once again reject the new clauses.

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): Tragically, murder is no stranger to my constituency. By a bizarre coincidence, today is the 27th anniversary of the very day in 1963 when two men were hanged—one in Bristol and one in Winchester—for the murder of a farmer in my constituency. The motive for their crime was robbery, and the sum they gained was £4. For £4, three people died—the farmer and the two murderers. One of the two men later claimed to have been a victim of the supernatural. Having been cautioned, he asked the interviewing officer, "We are over 21, so I suppose we can hang?"

During the 20 years that I have represented my constituency, we have, since the abolition of the death penalty, had four more identified murders. In the case of one, the offender was committed to an institution. In the second case, the offender used what is known as "the Portsmouth defence"—which I understand is a polite way of saying that he used undue and unnecessary violence in responding to an improper sexual advance—and, as a consequence, received what many people would regard as a light sentence. In the third case, the Director of Public Prosecutions was reluctant to proceed because he was not

happy with the evidence, and in the fourth case, the magistrates decided that there was no prima facie evidence against the accused on which to commit him for trial.

The point that I wish to make is that, in the case of the murder for £4, the two men—on the admission of one—still proceeded with the crime, despite their awareness that the gallows was the logical and inevitable consequence of the commission of that crime. To them, the death penalty was not a deterrent. Nor could it have been—had it existed—at the time of the four more recent murders. Therefore, in my opinion, the death penalty per se is not a deterrent to anybody embarking on an act that can result in an unlawful killing. Indeed, if from the works of Hogarth and Rowlandson we can see that, when public execution was the penalty for something as minimal as stealing, pickpockets stood in the crowd near the scaffold and plied their skill and trade while a felon was dangling before them as a solitary example and deterrent.

Again, the suggestion would seem to be reinforced that the criminal's mind does not, at the time he is committing the crime, dwell on the penalty likely ultimately to be inflicted by society. Indeed, it could be argued that the real deterrent for somebody embarking on any crime, be it a civil "crime", a non-violent crime or an unlawful killing, is probably based more on, first, being seen; secondly, being informed against; thirdly, being detected; fourthly, being convicted; and only then, fifthly, as a last consideration, the question of the possible penalty.

8.45 pm

Yet having said that, my own gut reaction is still that capital punishment has an important role in the armoury of law and order. The public want it; the public call for it and they feel that they would be much more secure with it. The police and prison services believe that their front-line task of detaining and then containing violent and vicious people would be made more secure and safer were the death penalty still to exist in this country.

The House disregards at its peril the joint cry of people, police and prison officers for what they see as the ultimate protection rather than the ultimate deterrent. Therefore, tonight, as in every similar Division since 1970, I shall support the reintroduction of capital punishment, as encompassed in new clause 5.

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): I intend to be brief. This is either the 22nd time that we have discussed this matter—according to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary—or it is the 19th time, but as we come back to this subject time and time again, I want to make one protest. I accept the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) that perhaps the public are beginning more and more to realise that this House is not minded to change its view. I know not whether that is actually happening, but it would be a benefit.

However, something else is happening at the same time. We are cheating those of our constituents who think that we will change our view. In fact, it is very unlikely that the House will change its mind. I have no doubt that the majority tonight will be similar to those in the past. It should be noted that that majority will be led by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—and will include the whole Cabinet, with one possible exception. It would be interesting if the House were to change its mind. What would the Government do? What would be the constitutional position? We have a free vote only when the Government know what the result will be.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that we have had free votes in the past, but that has not always been the case. There was trouble with the Homicide Act 1957, which was driven through on a three-line Whip. The Government needed it and used it. My protest is simple. By constantly returning to this subject, we do no good—and we do no good to many of our constituents also.

If I had been minded to change my mind, that would have been made impossible for me by what has happened in the past few years. When I last addressed the House on this subject, I gave the House a list of 10 cases that had been referred, by Home Secretaries over the years, back to the Court of Appeal. With varying degrees of certainty, but in each case, the cases were rejected, and it was said that those previously found guilty were not guilty. We should now add to that the case of the Guildford Four, on which I have just one brief comment. Nobody could conceivably read the summing up or look at the evidence given 16 years ago—this is not criticism of either the judge or the jury—without inevitably concluding that we would have used capital punishment at that time if it had been available. We did not use the death penalty.

It is noticeable that when the case came before the Court of Appeal on the final occasion, the Director of Public Prosecutions did not fight the case. He said, "I have looked at the new evidence and I have decided that I am not even prepared to ask the court to continue with this case. I ask the court to quash the conviction." Those men were wrongly convicted. That is the phrase I use. If we had used capital punishment, they would have been murdered in our name.

Mr. Hunter: I welcome the opportunity to make a brief speech in this debate but regret that I follow my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), with whom on this occasion I find myself in profound disagreement.

I wish to speak to new clause 2, tabled in my name, to which there have been many references in the past almost three and a half hours debate. It is supported by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), who is the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) and others.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) opened the debate, he said that there had been criticism that the debate was taking place. That sentiment was echoed by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). It is argued that only two and a half years ago the general subject of capital punishment was well debated and on that occasion the House rejected the reintroduction of the death penalty. I do not apologise for tabling one of the new clauses that led to the debate. I remain wholly unrepentant. It is right that the Committee should consider the broad theme which—I agree, in an amateur way—I have sought to convey in the wording of my new clause. The death penalty should be imposed on

"A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of murder committed as, or in pursuit of, an act of terrorism.".

Mr. Wilshire: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hunter: Not for the moment.

[Mr. Hunter]

Not all hon. Members realise that, in the two and a half years since we last debated the theme, over 500 people have died in the United Kingdom as a result of terrorist activities. Almost 2,500 have been injured. As far as I have been able to discover, that is a macabre and unwanted United Kingdom record for any two-and-a-half year period. Therefore, I make no apologies for introducing the theme of capital punishment.

After a terrorist outrage, the reintroduction of the death penalty is high on the agenda in pubs, clubs and homes throughout the country. It is entirely right that, during the passage of the Criminal Justice Bill the Committee should debate capital punishment and I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate.

As the arguments for and against the reintroduction of the death penalty are so well known, one can be extremely brief. One can speak more in paragraph headings than in substantive detail. I shall concentrate on two things. First, I wish to explain why I am convinced that the death penalty should be restored for murder committed as, or in pursuit of, an act of terrorism. I use the word "convinced" advisedly, because for me this is conviction politics. I have not always believed in the reintroduction of capital punishment. During my adult life I have changed my views and I now believe that it should be reintroduced. Secondly, I shall refer briefly to one argument that is often used against the reintroduction of capital punishment, an argument that we have heard this evening.

Let us have no illusions. By any diabolical criteria of judgment, terrorist murder is among the most cruel, calculated, callous and deliberate of all murders. In general, the modern terrorist is a highly sophisticated, highly trained and highly equipped dealer in death. In the United Kingdom, the terrorist effectively declares war on a free, open, liberal and democratic society. That is far removed from the armed struggles of liberation movements in countries with oppressive regimes.

I stress immediately that, in describing terrorism as war waged against society, one makes no concession to any claim for recognition of status, which the terrorist often makes. "War against society" is merely the appropriate description of the terrorist's use of the bomb and bullet.

To return to fundamentals, the state exists to promote and protect the interests of the individual. It is the state's duty to fight terrorism. I argue that the death penalty is an essential weapon in the armoury of the state in its on-going fight against terrorism and that, by failing to use it, as is now the case, the state fails in its twin obligations of fighting terrorism in the most effective way and protecting and promoting the interests of the individual in the most effective way.

First and foremost, the reintroduction of the death penalty for terrorist murder would be a moral statement of our total and utter repugnance of terrorism. It is surely right that our repugnance should be demonstrated by reserving for terrorist murder the ultimate sentence that courts can pronounce.

Secondly, the reintroduction of the death penalty for terrorist murder would bring due retribution to the terrorist murderer. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland suggested during his interesting speech that retribution should be left to the divine. Neither of us is fully qualified to pursue the debate, but I have always understood that an essential part of Christian theology is that the state has its part to play in the divine ordering of things. The blood of the innocent cries out for vengeance. We should be able to look to the state with confidence for that vengeance. The murdered and the maimed deserve no less.

Thirdly, the terrorist most emphatically sees the death penalty as a deterrent. To fail to understand that is to fail to understand the psychology of the terrorist. If any hon. Member believes that the IRA, for example, does not regard the death penalty as a deterrent, I respectfully suggest that he or she is profoundly mistaken.

If the IRA does not regard the death penalty as a deterrent, why does it inflict the death penalty on its members who break its code? It does so because it believes that by so doing it will deter others from following that course of action. If the IRA would welcome the reintroduction of the death penalty, as some hon. Members have argued this evening, why did it plead against the death penalty when Joe Cahill, the last member of the IRA to be in this position, was under sentence of death in the Republic of Ireland? The IRA did so because it was frightened of the impact that the execution would have on its movement.

9 pm

If the IRA does not fear the reintroduction of the death penalty, why did it threaten that, were capital punishment reintroduced, three British soldiers would die for every member of the IRA hanged? If the IRA does not fear the reintroduction of the death penalty, why did it try to intimidate this House against making such a decision by the brutal murder of six people on the day when we debated this subject in July 1983? It was because the IRA was frightened that we might vote for reintroduction.

Remember, the death penalty has never been abolished in Northern Ireland. It continues to this day in the form of tit-for-tat, sectarian murders. The greatest terrorist threat to the United Kingdom in Great Britain and Northern Ireland comes from the IRA. My straightforward plea and heartfelt conviction is nothing other than that IRA murderers should hang.

What about the Guildford Four? Every Member of Parliament and everyone who addresses the subject must come to terms with that. Let us keep the matter in perspective. There is no compelling evidence that the Guildford Four would have hanged—*[Interruption.]* Neither the police nor the jury would necessarily have behaved as they did had the death penalty been in existence. The death penalty did not exist in the 1970s, so the argument about whether innocent people might have hanged is purely academic. The relevant question is whether the Guildford miscarriage of justice could happen again. Much has been said and written about that. In my opinion, it could not.

Mr. Wilshire: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hunter: In a moment.

Recently, a senior police officer said:

"One thing is certain, no juror will ever forget Guildford."

In the aftermath of Guildford and, perhaps, Birmingham, which Crown court jury in a trial brought on the basis of confession evidence will set much store by that evidence? Certainly, jurors will be mindful of the possibility that what is being presented to them is what Lord Lane described as a "choreography of perjury".

Mr. Maclennan: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that if, following the reintroduction of capital punishment, no jurors will forget Guildford, the likely logic is that they will fail to convict?

Mr. Hunter: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point and those of us who propound the reintroduction of the death penalty must come to terms with it. I concede that convictions would be harder to secure. The Guildford and Birmingham cases are salutary experiences for our process of justice. Because of that, we can have more, not less, confidence that justice will be done.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): Our great anxiety is that nobody can know what the court would have said to the Guildford Four if capital punishment had existed. With respect to the hon. Gentleman, his is wishful thinking. He does not know. At the end of the day, there was a risk, although how big it was is debatable, that those convicted by the courts could have been hanged by the neck.

Mr. Hunter: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's remarks. It is more important that I proceed. I sense that other hon. Members wish to speak.

The tragedies of Guildford and, perhaps, Birmingham, coupled with the reintroduction of the death penalty, will make it virtually certain that such miscarriages of justice never occur again.

In conclusion, let me summarise my argument simply: I have no hesitation in saying that our fight against terrorism, most especially IRA terrorism, will be stronger and more effective if the death penalty is restored.

Mrs. Peacock: I should like to confine my remarks to new clause 3. Earlier today, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that the new clause was not compatible with British justice. In that case, he should introduce a suitable clause that is compatible and technically correct, so that the death penalty is returned to the statute book.

This subject generates more heat than light, and deeply held personal convictions are rarely swayed. Capital punishment is a moral question as well as a practical policy matter, and one strand cannot be separated from the other. In the short time available to me, I cannot hope to change views and I believe there will be precious few floating voters in the Lobby tonight. I shall, however, set out some of the arguments for and against capital punishment while suggesting, on balance, that those in favour are more convincing.

Whatever the Committee decides, if we had a national referendum today it would demonstrate overwhelming support for the reintroduction of capital punishment—to be used as and when necessary rather than for a specific category of crime. I should explain that I have had for many years deeply held convictions about capital punishment that have not been arrived at lightly or without serious consideration of the moral issue involved. I can merely recount my personal views, but I believe that they are widely supported in the country, as they are in my constituency.

There have been 17 debates in the House in the past 30 years, all of which have resulted in an abolitionist stance on capital punishment. It was removed from the statute book for a trial period and then absolutely in 1969. The arguments for and against have been well rehearsed and are widely known. We all agree that there is little new that one can add to the argument, but it is right that we should respond to the many people who feel that this matter should be debated from time to time.

I believe that capital punishment would be the supreme deterrent. In evidence, I draw attention to the fundamental changes that have taken place in society since the partial abolition of the death penalty in 1965 and its full abolition in 1969. Recent tragic events, many in Ulster, and the recent murder of two consultants at Pinderfields hospital, Wakefield, are graphic examples of the fact that the possession of and resort to lethal weapons has become commonplace in Britain. Only this year, an elderly lady constituent of mine, aged 92, was murdered in her house, which was part of a terrace, at 6 o'clock at night, but nobody heard the attack and, as yet, no one has been found responsible for that dreadful crime. At one time, such attacks were associated with metropolitan areas only, but now they are widespread.

Figures on crime can be made to say different things. It is true, however, that those figures reflect the general increase in the level of crime and the fact that, in the past couple of years, there has been an increase in willingness to report crime. No absolute proof for or against capital punishment can be obtained from figures. The deterrent effect of capital punishment cannot be proven by statistics. It is impossible to calculate how many people would be deterred from carrying and using firearms if capital punishment was available to the courts.

I do not accept the argument that many criminals in the course of a burglary carry arms just in case—if they do not intend to use them, they should not carry them. A misleading argument that is often advanced by abolitionists is that the reintroduction of capital punishment would encourage a nothing-to-lose attitude among certain sections of the public, but I assure the House that such an attitude already exists on our streets.

So far, the undercurrent of my speech has been that murder has become commonplace. There are those who argue that the absence of capital punishment is the mark of a civilised society, but the hacking to death of a policeman in our streets in recent years or the gunning down of security guards or other innocent people who come between thugs and their goal surely cannot be the marks of a civilised society. The criminal law in this country simply no longer provides credible sanction for the most heinous form of wrongdoing. Surely we are all agreed that something must be done.

The majority of people in this country are in favour of the reintroduction of the death penalty. According to polls conducted in recent years for national newspapers, a steady 90 per cent. of the large samples interviewed support the substance of the measure. The strength of feeling in constituencies where I have spoken around the country has not, and does not, alter. There is a strong feeling that the death penalty would act as a deterrent.

Only this past weekend, the *Yorkshire Evening Post*—a well-known evening newspaper in Yorkshire—carried out its own referendum. The result was that 2,505 callers were in favour of capital punishment and 444 were against. That referendum was conducted between the newspaper coming out on Friday afternoon and midnight that evening. BBC Radio Leeds carried out a poll this morning during a short 20-minute programme, when 327 people

[Mrs. Peacock]

phoned in in favour of the death penalty and 37 against. They are only small samples, but they show the general feeling throughout the country today.

I realise that we are here as Members of Parliament and not delegated to put forward the exact views of our constituents, as trade union representatives might do at a conference. However, we have a responsibility to represent our constituents' views in debates in the House. We should do the best we can to protect our constituents' interests. If people in this country decide that their interests are best protected by the death penalty as a sanction for murder, who are hon. Members to decide differently? Do we all have secret information that persuades us to decide otherwise?

Mr. Wilshire: We have our consciences.

Mrs. Peacock: My hon. Friend says that we have our consciences—we should have a conscience for the victims. We have heard a great deal today about what happens to the actual murderers, but little mention in the House about the victims, their families or the follow-on from such tragic events. We have a right to look at those responsibilities.

We should not take a paternalistic or arrogant attitude to matters in this debate just because we have been elected and have two letters after our names. That does not make us different from other people; it does not mean that we should not listen to the views of our constituents. It is high time that we as Members of Parliament came down from our ivory towers, did what the people of Britain want us to do and supported the reintroduction of the death penalty —as we should do in the Lobby tonight.

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I shall speak briefly on new clause 4. We all agree that treason is one of the most horrible and foul crimes—that has always been so in England and in any civilised society. It seems utterly extraordinary that the movers of the new clause have chosen this time to bring forward the new and revolutionary idea of letting off traitors with a prison sentence. Have they no knowledge of recent history? Do they not know the immense damage that a catalogue of traitors has caused to the country since the war, from Blunt to Blake and from Philby to any number of lesser traitors? What sort of signal does the new clause send to any evil-minded person who might consider becoming a traitor? Why reduce the sentence for the most heinous of crimes just at this time because of a liberal, wishy-washy idea that has no support from our constituents except among the chattering classes and possibly readers of *The Guardian*?

The people whom we represent are troubled today as never before by crimes of violence. They are troubled by terrorism and, from time to time, by treason. Have the movers of the new clause any idea of how ordinary people feel about these grave matters? Listening to the speeches of some hon. Members today, I have been amazed by how out of touch with their constituents they seem to be.

9.15 pm

We are sent here to represent ordinary, decent, law-abiding people who look to us to uphold the full rigour of the law. We have all English history behind us. This afternoon, I looked up in the Library the Treason Act 1351, which in part states:

> "When a Man doth compass or imagine the Death of our Lord the King, or of our Lady his Queen, or of their eldest Son and Heir; or if a Man do violate the King's . . . Daughter . . . or if a Man do levy War against . . . the King . . . they ought to be judged Treason".

We would all say amen to that.

Those who support the new clause stand opposed to centuries of English history. Their views are those of a tiny minority, completely out of touch with public opinion. The new clause deserves to be decisively rejected.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I shall vote in favour of new clause 1 and have lent my name to it because I believe in the sanctity of life and I am in favour of saving life, not taking it. It is only by having a deterrent that life will be saved. It is particularly appropriate that I should have been called this evening, since I am the only Birmingham Member to have spoken apart from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), and the word "Birmingham" has occurred time and again in the debate and been used for various purposes.

The terrible explosions that night took place in New street at the Tavern in the Town, a pub kept by one of my councillors, and at another pub. Both were blown up. Incredible carnage was wrought, not by accident or mistake but by design—and not against the state, but against innocent people, whose blood ran through the gutters of Birmingham that night.

The people of Birmingham are in no doubt whether they believe in capital punishment as a deterrent. This evening's *Birmingham Evening Mail*, which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook will not have read yet, announces that it has just conducted an in-depth analysis of its readers' views. They have overwhelmingly, knowing all the facts of this and other matters, declared that more than 85 per cent. of them are in favour of the reintroduction of capital punishment at this opportune time for a debate, when there is a new Prime Minister and a new Home Secretary.

I am a comparatively new Member of the House, having been here only since 1979. I have taken part in seven debates on the subject and have voted in favour of the death penalty in all 15 votes—as I shall again tonight. Let us not denigrate the views of the people whom we represent. They are the views of the democracy that we are supposed to translate into this Chamber. They are expressed concisely in this evening's *Birmingham Evening Mail* editorial, which says of Members of Parliament:

> "They claim to consider matters on a higher plane than the gut emotional reaction of voters who put them there in the first place. The arguments mainly ranged against reintroducing the death penalty are that it is inhumane, that it does not act as a deterrent and that miscarriages of justice cannot be rectified. This last point is likely to weigh heavily on MPs . . . But the man in the street clearly remains unconvinced. Unfortunately for public opinion, MPs are not."

My views and those of my constituents are crystal clear. Britain has rejected a policy that has been successful in other areas, the philosophy of the deterrent. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member wishes to speak, he should ask you, Sir Paul. He has not been here very long and I should be obliged if he would allow me to proceed.

The philosophy of the deterrent has been successful in the other areas in which it has been used. Without the deterrent of the nuclear bomb, we should not now be disarming and seeing peace and diminishing aggression.

We are told that the figures are unclear. The homicide statistics are palpably clear, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has explained. The number of homicides decreased substantially from 1946 to 1964, but they doubled between 1969 band 1989. Such points are made elsewhere in an excellent book that I have—the Government statistics. The Spanish figures on page 16 show that, after capital punishment had been abolished, homicides per million of the population rose from 5 per cent. in 1978 to 23 per cent. this year. Similarly, the Japanese percentage declined by half when capital punishment was in force.

The last page shows the American statistics, which reveal that the percentage per million is lower where capital punishment is in force than where it is not. That is sustainable country by country, perimeter by perimeter, sector by sector. When I last moved and spoke to a new clause in 1983 which proposed capital punishment for the murder of a policeman while performing his duty, it failed by only 81 votes, the smallest margin by which such a new clause has failed since I entered Parliament.

I hope that hon. Members will look not only at their consciences but at the statistics. I hope that they will bear in mind our responsibility to the people whom we represent. Overwhelmingly they tell us that there is a tremendous case to do what they, under our democratic system, have asked us to do, and reintroduce capital punishment for specific types of crime, including murder.

Mr. Sayeed: The last judicial execution occurred 27 years ago today in Horfield prison, Bristol. Some of the older residents of Bristol remember it well in a variety of ways. They view capital punishment with either repugnance or great anger. We can all understand the repugnance. For the state to kill a person is repugnant. We must also understand what their anger is about: it is caused by their feeling that this Parliament of the people neglects the people's views. It does so partly because the format for our debates is too rigid. We have to codify, to use clear legal language and to be specific. We have to vote on a specific legal measure, and this can be limiting.

We should have the opportunity to debate the principle of capital punishment before deciding on any aspect of it. We should have the opportunity to answer this question: does the state have the right to authorise its servants to take life outside times of war or to save life? Put simply, is judicial killing right? Only when that question has been answered can we answer the questions about what methods may be used or to what crimes capital punishment should be applied or what safeguards are necessary.

Many arguments have been adduced for and against capital punishment, but they fall into three groups. First, the suggestion is that it is never right to take life. That is a perfectly honourable and respectable view to hold, but it is naive.

Secondly—I am using shorthand terms—is capital punishment a deterrent? We have been told both that it will and will not deter terrorists. I believe that the first terrorist who is judicially executed may be a martyr, but the following ones will be mugs. To support that argument, I ask who remembers the names of those who died through the hunger strikes. Bobby Sands is probably the only one who will be remembered.

People also query whether capital punishment will deter the domestic murder. Although there is no proof, it is said that it will not. Thirdly, we come to one of the most serious arguments—one that should not be ducked—against capital punishment, and that is the possibility of making mistakes.

My answers to the queries are as follows. First, the state has the right to take life. Secondly, except for those who are intent on self-immolation, and there are only a few of them, we can be certain that the death penalty will at least not encourage murder. I believe, and common sense tells me, that it is likely to deter some murders. On the third point, there is a possibility—it may be only theoretical—given appropriate safeguards, that mistakes can be made, as men are not infallible. Mistakes have been made in letting murderers out from gaol. Some 59 people have been murdered by people who have been let out of gaol after committing other murders.

A society that treats life, rather than how life is led, as the most precious thing, should demonstrate its utter repugnance of the actions of certain individuals. It can do that by exercising the ultimate sanction of judicial killing.

I do not agree with all the new clauses. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) has tabled an interesting new clause. I agree with its aim, but not with its specifics. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) has suggested that the murder of police officers should attract the supreme penalty. I disagree with him. Why should police officers be singled out as those who should be especially protected? After all, they enter a profession—it is one that we value—knowing the risks that are involved. They are paid to be police officers. Why, as others have asked, should a police officer who tries to apprehend a criminal and is shot make that criminal liable to a capital sentence when he would not be subject to that risk if an ordinary civilian tried to apprehend him?

Mr. Gale: Will my hon. Friend give way on that?

9.30 pm

Mr. Sayeed: No, I shall not give way. I have little time available to me, and I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

I support capital punishment. I shall support the cause of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale but only because I support the principle behind it and believe that that principle should be implemented.

This is an important debate. As we are discussing an issue that will not go away, it would be for the benefit of the House of Commons if in future we could come to a decision on the principle of capital punishment before arriving at decisions on related specifics.

Mr. Janman: I shall speak to new clause 3 and then turn to some of the wider arguments that stem from it. At this stage in a debate it is almost certain that I shall be repetitious, and I apologise in advance should that prove to be so. It is interesting that new clause 3 answers some of the concerns that have been expressed about the reintroduction of capital punishment. Hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber have asked, "If we believe in the deterrent effect of reintroducing capital punishment, why should the deterrent apply only to certain categories of murder?" The new clause does not suggest in its provisions that prison officers, policemen or any other members of society will be protected by the deterrent effect and that others will not. It will apply to all cases of murder.

[Mr. Janman]

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, the new clause would mean that someone who committed murder would not know what the eventual outcome would be. Thus, while providing a deterrent effect, the clause provides a safety net or a second hurdle. It means that, after the case has been heard and the initial court has convicted, or found the defendant guilty, and imposed a sentence of capital punishment in accordance with legislation placed on the statute book by Parliament, there will be a period of review. The new clause would ensure that the Court of Appeal would have an opportunity to ensure that there were no mitigating circumstances that should lead to the sentence being commuted to life imprisonment.

New clause 3 is the most comprehensive of the proposed new clauses that we are considering. It is the most logical, and it is the one that will take us nearest to the position that pertained before abolition. There was capital punishment then, but it was used judiciously and not merely for the sake of using it.

I support capital punishment because it provides a deterrent. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) quoted statistics, and others have repeated them. It is worth homing in on the statistics, because they are so important. They are British statistics that relate to the experience and history of our country and to those whom we represent. It is a fact that the murder rate has more than doubled from about six per million to over 12 per million since abolition. There are those who say that crime generally has been increasing—I accept that the rates of many different types of crime have increased—but between 1945 and 1964, when the murder rate stayed on a plateau, the background to that was a doubling of crime rates generally. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East was perhaps being optimistic when he said that, during that period, the murder rate declined.

It was not against a background of crime in general remaining static. The fact that crime has been rising from 1965 does not nullify the fact that, between 1945 and 1964, the murder rate was on a plateau, but that since the abolition of capital punishment it has more than doubled.

Much use has been made tonight of foreign statistics. As I said in an intervention in the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), in the United States as a whole—we must remember that many of its states retain capital punishment—the murder rate between 1970 and 1988 rose only from 7·9 per 100,000 of the population to 8·4 per 100,000. That country has many communities and cities which, unfortunately for them, are some of the most violent and homicidal in the world, yet its murder rate has risen only marginally while Britain's has more than doubled.

Statistics for individual states in the USA can be used to draw all sorts of different conclusions by any person with good powers of analysis. The figures for individual states conceal more than they reveal. For example, the ratio in one state may be different from that in another simply because of an influx of people to that state, none of whom has committed murder. We cannot draw too much on the statistics for individual states, but the overall murder rate for the USA as a whole has hardly changed since 1970 because many individual states retain capital punishment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) pre-empted some of what I had intended to say when he referred to Spain and Japan. However, it is worth recording that Japan has retained capital punishment for murder. Unlike previous speakers, I do not propose that we should extend the remit of the courts to impose capital punishment for other sorts of crime. The number of murders in Japan since 1974 per million of the population has fallen from 17·4 to 13·8. In Greece—a country that my hon. Friend did not mention—where capital punishment was abolished in 1972, the murder rate increased from 8·7 per million in 1974 to 15·4 in 1986.

I was astonished to hear the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) say that there was no evidence to prove the deterrent theory. I could accept an hon. Member saying that it is difficult to conclude from the statistics whether there is a deterrent effect, but my close study of the statistics leads me to believe that it is without foundation for anyone to say that the statistics do not, at the very least, leave room for doubt. If the statistics from various countries point to anything, they point to the fact that capital punishment deters.

Let us talk not just about statistics, but about real life. In the east end of London—which is near my constituency—and in some parts of Essex, it would be optimistic to suggest there there is not a large number of people who embark on criminal activity. My constituents tell me all sorts of anecdotes about what used to happen and what happens now. In days gone by, when capital punishment existed, criminals checked each other to ensure that they were not carrying what is known in my part of the world as a shooter. They knew that, if one of their colleagues carried a gun, they could all swing for it. That self-policing and that desire to reduce the enthusiasm of their criminal colleagues to carry guns have been negated by the fact that the ultimate deterrent, capital punishment, does not exist.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) said that, if he were faced with the option of a 20-year sentence or capital punishment, he would choose the latter. I wonder whether he would still say that if death were facing him. Death is and must be the ultimate deterrent. I do not believe that any man who was sentenced to death would refuse the possibility of his sentence being commuted to life imprisonment, and that is the real test. A legal historian last century, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, explained why. He said:

"All that a man has, will he give for his life. In any secondary punishment, however terrible, there is hope; but death is death; its terrors cannot be described more forcibly".

That historian summed it up in a nutshell. A person sentenced to life imprisonment will always have the hope that some do-gooder will come along and convince the Establishment and the authorities that he should be let out and that at some time he will again have his liberty and see the light of day.

Another main reason why I support bringing back capital punishment is public opinion. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that he did not believe that the state should have the power to take a person's life. What did he mean by the "state"? Did he mean the British nation state which, as many of us observe, is gradually being undermined? Did he mean the Government? I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, if he means the Government—I assume that he does—he is talking about a Government acting on behalf of the citizens of the state.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley put it so eloquently, lucidly and passionately, every opinion poll has shown that the citizens of the state, the people who should decide what the state does on these issues, are wholeheartedly in favour of bringing back capital punishment. The support for bringing back capital punishment is just as strong in Thurrock as it is in the fine city of Birmingham.

I do not like reading out long quotes, but I should like to quote a letter that Enoch Powell wrote to *The Daily Telegraph* in 1974. I choose that man because he was an abolitionist and voted against capital punishment. He wrote:

"I should be the last to imply that a Member of Parliament ought to subordinate his judgment of what is wise or right to even the most overwhelming majority of opinion. If he believes a thing harmful, he must not support it; if he thinks it unjust, he must denounce it. In those judgments the opinion of those he represents has no claim over him. But capital punishment is not for me in that category: it is not self-evidently harmful, nor self-evidently unjust. I cannot therefore deny that in this context a settled and preponderant public demand ought to be taken into account or that at a certain point it would have to prevail.

I do not believe that point has been reached; but it would be disingenuous for me to deny that it could exist."

I contend that we have now reached that point. If the views of people in my local pub are anything to go by—we have all heard views put to us in our local pubs—people are even more in favour of reintroducing capital punishment than they were in 1974. Several people said to me, "Ten years ago, Mr. Janman, we did not support capital punishment, but now, with terrorist offences and the increase in the number of child murders, we believe that this must be looked at again. We believe that Parliament has got it wrong."

Let me return to the comments of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. He said that the state should not have the power to take a person's life. He was very honest about it; he said that, even if he thought that the deterrence argument was correct, he would still hold to that view. But who is the right hon. Gentleman and who are those who vote against capital punishment to impose their moral and ethical views of capital punishment on the majority of people in this country? The majority of people—and, presumably, if the polls are correct, the majority of those whom the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook represents —want capital punishment back. The general view of people in this country is that it is not immoral to vote for capital punishment. Given the proven case for the deterrent effect, I contend that it is immoral to vote against something which would save a large number—probably hundreds—of innocent lives every year.

I had intended to speak for longer, but I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) and others wish to speak. Parliament must reflect on the fact that the vast majority of people in this country, who live in the real world and with the real consequences of abolition—a vastly increased murder rate—want capital punishment back. Let us vote to bring it back tonight.

9.45 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Without mincing my words, let me say that the House of Commons always fails to reflect public opinion on this matter. Every opinion poll and every radio survey tells us that the people of Britain would like the ultimate deterrent to be put in place. When I came to the House, I vainly thought that my small influence on the Back Benches would produce a country where women could walk to their friends' and relations' houses and to the shops without fear of being raped or murdered, where the elderly could go out after dark and were safe in their own homes and where children could play without fear of being molested or murdered. That is not the sort of society that we have produced, and I will tell the House why: we do not have the ultimate deterrent to the most evil offence.

The police, who are at the sharp end of the game, have to detect and apprehend criminals. They want capital punishment restored. Who are we to deny our unarmed police that facility? It is absolutely disgraceful. Does anyone in the Committee know how much it has cost so far for Myra Hindley and Ian Brady to be kept in a mental hospital and in prison? It has cost £250,000. Much of that money is paid out of the taxes of the bereaved whose little children they murdered and buried one mile above my house in Saddleworth moor. Today, we would have to find something like £500,000 to sustain someone convicted of murder in prison for 30 years. That is absolutely disgraceful.

What sort of people are we? I will tell the House. Our armed forces are the envy of the world. General Eisenhower said that he would rather serve next to a British soldier than any other service man in the world. If we are strong on defence—if we are the sort of nation that will not be pushed around—why are we so woolly-headed and mealy-mouthed about capital punishment?

We should take note of the speech made by the reverend Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) who sees his people being killed day after day and visits the bereaved whether Roman Catholic or Protestant. For the murder of a police officer or prison warder, for going to commit a crime with a weapon, and killing, and for the murder of a child, people ought to suffer the rope. It is retribution—perhaps it is revenge—but, my goodness, it is the ultimate deterrent. Dr. Johnson once said that nothing concentrates the mind like the imminent fear of death.

Sir Winston Churchill said, "Trust the people." Why does Parliament not trust the people? Whatever papers we read, the public demand capital punishment.

Mr. Mallon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dickens: No, the hon. Member made a long speech earlier.

It is absurd that we are having this debate today. There have been only a few by-elections since 1988. Those of us who want the reintroduction of capital punishment are on a hiding to nothing, because we know the stance that most hon. Members will take. The debate keeps the ball in play, but it encourages people to believe that we might be successful tonight. We should really have held fire and allowed my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to settle in a bit. We should have had time to work on him. We should have waited for the next general election and an increased Conservative majority. We would then have got capital punishment through Parliament.

It gives me no great pleasure to vote for someone's death. That is against all my beliefs as a Christian. However, I am prepared to vote for it, because the state has a duty to protect its citizens. Parliament is a long way

[Mr. Dickens]

from protecting the citizens. If we do not control the most evil of crimes and set a tough tariff, judges will give carpet-slipper sentences instead of using hobnail boots.

Whether we win the vote or not, we need capital punishment. Those who say that we do not need it are weak. When those people were selected, they were asked where they stood on capital punishment. Most of them said that they supported it, but they do not support it once they became hon. Members. They only said that they would support it because they were grovelling for a seat in Parliament. Right hon. and hon. Members should follow me into the Lobby and vote for the restoration of capital punishment.

Mr. Wilshire: I can agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) only to the extent that this debate is a little premature. If we are to re-run the debate, the circumstances should have changed. I accept that a general election leads to a change of personnel in this place, and it would then be appropriate to re-run the debate. However, since 1988, only one thing has changed. The list of those who might have been hanged has been extended by four in the case of the Guildford Four. If we take that change into account, the majority against the reintroduction of capital punishment tonight should be higher than it was last time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) both said that Christianity calls on the state to kill. They said that as if it was the definition of what Christianity said. I hope that they and others will accept that other people reach the opposite conclusion when they consider the Christian approach to capital punishment. Some believe that the state should kill, but I believe that the state should never kill.

Deterrence has been debated at great length, but it has not been proved. If we are to restore capital punishment using deterrence as the argument, that argument must be proved beyond all reasonable doubt before we start once again to kill people in circumstances in which the facts can be taken one way or the other.

No one took up my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary when he referred to the process of killing. He asked the House to consider, if we were to approve the new clause, which method of killing we would prefer. He asked us to consider which would be the most efficient method. Should we inject, should we electrocute, or should we gas? With the greatest respect to my right hon. Friend, whichever method we were to choose, some of us would consider every single method barbaric. If efficiency is to be one argument—again, with respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth, if we are ever again to hear the argument that the economics of keeping people in jail is one reason for capital punishment—I shall despair of the future of the House and of democracy in this country.

The debate started with the argument that the punishment should fit the crime, as though that somehow justified capital punishment. Many people from whom I hear argue like that because life does not mean life. There are plenty of ways of making the punishment fit the crime. That is not a logical argument that leads only to capital punishment.

We also heard the argument that we have now somehow refined the system and that we have now somehow changed the Acts of Parliament so that mistakes will never be made again. If you look at *Hansard*, Sir Paul, you will find that, after every mistake, it was said in this place that we had changed the system and that it would not happen again. Even if there is a 1 per cent. risk of just one more innocent person in this country ever being killed by the state, that is the most powerful reason for not reintroducing capital punishment.

On new clause 4, hon. Members heard the debate about whether we should abolish capital punishment for treason. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary—I am afraid I do not follow his logic—said that, if we were to vote to change the law on treason, we would somehow indicate that we accept that law and want to see it operate. The opposite could just as well be true. If we were to reject the call to abolish capital punishment for treason, it could be argued that the House indicated that it wants that Act to be enforced and that it wants capital punishment to stay on the statute book and to be used. The choice is clear.

The only point on which I disagree with the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) was his statement that he could understand why the Armed Forces Act 1971 should be left out. I cannot see any reason to leave on the statute book anything that requires capital punishment for crimes under that Act. If we have an opportunity for the Armed Forces Act to be amended, that is what should happen.

The last point that I want to tackle is the comment that has been made to me when hon. Members have given way and allowed me to intervene. It is summed up by the hon. Member who asked, "Who are we to ignore our constituents?" We must never confuse disagreeing with ignoring. There is a great difference. I do not ignore my constituents, I just profoundly disagree with them. What do we owe our constituents? We owe them not only our enthusiasm and hard work but our integrity. If we were to listen to some constituents, we would be listening to the mob. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Yes, on these issues, we would. I have a horrible feeling that, if we were to listen to opinion polls and act accordingly, we would have some nasty conclusions about the coloured population of this country and some nasty conclusions about people with alternative life styles. I hope that we shall never follow the route of the mob. We owe our constituents our integrity.

If, like me, Sir Paul, for all your adult life you had been opposed to judicial killing, and if you had believed that it was obscene for the state to take life in that way, you would agree that it was a pretty shoddy thing and a shoddy way in which to treat your constituents to say, "I will curry favour with you and abandon my principles." You should stick to those principles, Sir Paul, and remember, as I said last time—it bears repeating—when you shave in the morning, make sure that you like what you see in the mirror. If we abandon our self-respect, we are of no use to our constituents.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): The Chairman of Ways and Means said at the beginning of the debate that the Chair would listen to the arguments used and then decide on which new clauses Divisions would be available. The first Division will be on new clause 1. After that, if the Committee so desires, Divisions can take place on new clauses 3, 4 and 5.

The first Division is on new clause 1.

It being Ten o'clock, THE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [13 December], to put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The Committee divided: Ayes 215, Noes 350.

Division No. 30] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock and Mr. Teddy Taylor.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs. Irene
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence

Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nellist, Dave
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Bottomley and
Mr. Stuart Bell.

Question accordingly negatived.

The FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *then proceeded, pursuant to the said Order, to put forthwith the Questions which he was directed to put at that hour.*

New Clause 3

PUNISHMENT FOR MURDER

'(1) Subject to the following sub-sections the penalty for murder shall be death.

(2) No person aged under 18 years shall suffer the death penalty.

(3) As soon as practicable following a sentence of death, a special sitting of the Court of Appeal shall be convened to consider whether the circumstances of either

(a) the commission of the offence or

(b) the offender

whether or not such circumstances were adduced in evidence at the trial, are such as would justify the substitution of a sentence of life imprisonment in place of the sentence of death.

(4) This Act shall apply to Northern Ireland.'.—*[Mr. Lawrence.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 182, Noes 367.

Division No. 31] **[at 10.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'l's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Holt, Richard
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shelton, Sir William
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ivan Lawrence and
Mr. Martin Brandon-Bravo.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs. Irene
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fishburn, John Dudley

Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nellist, Dave
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Bottomley and
Mr. Stuart Bell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 4

ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY

'(1) In section 1 of the Treason Act 1790, for the words "hanged by the neck until she or they be severally dead" there shall be substituted the words "sentenced to imprisonment for life".

(2) In section 1 of the Treason Act 1814, for the words "hanged by the neck until such person be dead", there shall be substituted the words "sentenced to imprisonment for life".

(3) In section 2 of the Piracy Act 1837, for the words "suffer death" there shall be substituted the words "sentenced to imprisonment for life".'.—*[Mr. Archer.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 257, Noes 289.

Division No. 32] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs. Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*

Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
French, Douglas
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. David Wilshire.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den

Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy360
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooney, Terence
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo and Mr. Peter Bottomley.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 5

DEATH PENALTY FOR MURDER

'A person aged 18 years or above who is convicted of murder committed by means of firearms, explosives or an offensive weapon, or for the murder of a police or prison officer, shall on conviction be sentenced to death, unless the court determines that the circumstances of the case, including any extenuating circumstances, make it more appropriate for a life sentence of imprisonment.'.—*[Mr. Teddy Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time: *The Committee divided:* Ayes 186, Noes 349.

Division No. 33] **[10.43 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter

Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
McCrea, Rev William
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shelton, Sir William
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Greenway and Mrs. Teresa Gorman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs. Irene
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, John
Freeman, Roger
Fyfe, Maria
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodlad, Alastair
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Madel, David
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Major, Rt Hon John
Mallon, Seamus
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Needham, Richard
Nellist, Dave
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stern, Michael
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Walters, Sir Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes
Mr. Peter Bottomley and
Mr. Stuart Bell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill reported in relation to certain clauses, none of which had been added to the Bill.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Police and Criminal Evidence Act

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 2) Order 1990, dated 8th November 1990, a copy of which was laid before this House on 19th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Misuse of Drugs

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 21st November, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Roads (Bury)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

10.57 pm

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): We are constantly told that we live in a new, environmentally aware, era. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, would have to be far more persuasive than me to convince my constituents that that is so. They face several threats to their local environment, ranging from planned supermarkets to a takeover bid from Manchester city council. But undoubtedly the greatest threat to that local environment is a possible new motorway, weaving its way through the heart of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt).

The news which came to light last summer that the Department of Transport, under its 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" was planning a motorway—the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road—to connect the M62 and M66 motorways was greeted with anger, and incredulity by my constituents. They greeted the news with anger, because the possible route—I stress that no final decision about the principle or detail of such a route has yet been taken—would cut through the beauties of the Croal Irwell valley which is so loved by walkers, ramblers and naturalists, would continue through some prime agricultural land and Stand golf club—a much used and popular sporting facility—proceed to destroy some lovely homes and gardens, and would finally damage and disrupt the commercial premises of the James Holstead group, the leading employers in my constituency and the largest manufacturers of PVC sheet vinyl flooring in the British Isles. Taken in toto, the proposed route represents an intolerable intrusion into the countryside, the leisure and sporting facilities and the home and business life of my constituency.

I accept that the proposals for the proposed route are still at the earliest stages of consultation and that alternatives, of which I am not aware, are being considered. I understand that the public's views will be taken into account and that, even if a relief road is constructed, that will not happen until after the approval of a full public inquiry, and that construction will not take place, subject to the public money then being available, until well into the next century. I accept all those valid points, but the possibility of such a proposal or of equally unsatisfactory alternatives has mobilised public opinion in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North right across the political divide.

I said that the news of a possible new motorway was greeted by my constituents with anger and incredulity. I have described the reasons for their anger. Their incredulity arises from the fact that the idea for the motorway seems to have been based on guesstimates by the Department of Transport. They are guesstimates about the amount of motorway traffic that there will be in 20 years' time; guesstimates of the effect, or lack of it, of the proposed widening to four lanes of the present M62; and guesstimates about the consequences of the planned completion of the M66 between Denton and Middleton. Guesstimates are all very well, but they do not justify the havoc that those proposals would cause for my constituents.

I want to pay tribute to my constituents who are doing so much to oppose the proposals and, in particular, to pay tribute to SWARM. That is not a collection of bees, although it comprises very busy people. SWARM stands for Stop the Whitefield and Radcliffe Motorway. It is an action group that has been formed to co-ordinate opposition to any relief road through my constituency. Its members have worked hard and long to alert public opinion, and I salute SWARM's diligent and dedicated officers: Ken Forman the chairman, Fiona Hanlon the secretary, Robin Gibson the treasurer, and Lorraine Palastrand the publicity officer. They, together with their fellow SWARM members, are owed a deep debt of public gratitude for what they are doing, and I am glad of this opportunity to place my thanks on the public record.

When putting my thanks on the public record, it is only right that I should thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic for visiting my constituency at short notice over the summer to see for himself the area that will be damaged, and even destroyed, if the proposals ever see the light of day. However, my hon. Friend's welcome visit is not enough. My constituents and I want far more from him than that.

In the short term, we need clarification of when consultation and discussion with the public will take place. Rumour is about that it was planned for the spring of next year but that it has now been postponed until the autumn or even later in 1991, or possibly even in 1992. Signs have been given that any public inquiry, if it is needed, will not be held until 1995 at the earliest. Will my hon. Friend specifically and in terms confirm whether those dates are accurate? My constituents need some certainty in these matters.

Certainty is needed not just for peace of mind or for the planning of the campaign; it is needed for a practical and important reason. As my hon. Friend knows, once the proposal for a relief road became public knowledge, the effect on property values and house sales was little short of disastrous. Despite the fact that no decision has yet been made on any motorway route, despite the fact that any road will not be built for another 15 or 20 years, or perhaps never, a widespread housing blight has been created in the Whitefield and Radcliffe parts of my constituency.

I can do no better than to refer to one of the many letters that I have received from constituents, or, in this case, from their solicitors. They state:

"Our clients have asked us to write to you to confirm that they have had their house on the market, but purchasers have specifically withdrawn because of the prospect of the motorway proposals. Our clients are having to move for business reasons but are unable to do so because of the blight to which their property is subject."

I appreciate that, until a specific route is announced by the Department of Transport, no legal entitlement for housing blight compensation exists. I appreciate, too, that, to avoid the situation that I have described, confidentiality of consultation with local authorities and others at the early stages is necessary because such proposals may never proceed. I appreciate also that the Department of Transport is not responsible for that breach of confidentiality. However—this is the important point—neither are any of my constituents, who now have to pay a very heavy price for the housing blight that has been created.

The Minister has told me that he will look sympathetically at the problems once the public consultation stage has been reached. I had hoped that he

[Mr. David Sumberg]

could have done that before that stage. However, if that is not legally possible, it is vital that we get on with the consultation exercise as quickly as possible so that some help can be given to those constituents who simply cannot sell their homes. In the short term, an announcement on those lines from the Minister would be most welcome, but, in the long term, an announcement that the proposal is to be abandoned completely would be even more welcome.

As one of the local newspapers circulating in my area put it,

"The environmental squalor such a scheme would cause, with stilted roads, destruction of property and the carving up of scarce green areas and recreational land, including two golf courses, is too nightmarish to contemplate. Bury already has more than its share of motorways. Because there is peak time chaos on one of the routes it is no excuse for heaping more motorways on those living in the area. Pollution inflicted by motor vehicles is well documented. It cannot continue at the present rate without poisoning the atmosphere to a dangerous level. Because one road is choked-up it does not follow another should be provided."

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he replies sooner or, probably, later, will lift the threat that now hangs over so much of my constituency.

11.8 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) has allowed me a few minutes.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Has the hon. Member who has the Adjournment informed the Minister?

Mr. Sumberg: I have, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has not informed the Chair. It is courteous to inform the Chair of such an intervention. I am sure that he will do so in future.

Mr. Sumberg: I am very sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. It was my error. Please forgive me.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is Christmas. I call Mr. Alistair Burt.

Mr. Burt: I share the error of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg), Madam Deputy Speaker.

First, I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me some time at the end of his speech. I should like to associate myself with everything that he has said, much of which relates to my constituency as well as to his. Secondly, I thank those in my constituency who have already taken up the cudgels in the manner that he suggested has happened in his own. I thank those residents who have been involved in work, especially Mrs. Reay, Mrs. Foran and my two councillors, Des Eccleston and Sam Cohen for their work.

The proposed route of the new road in my constituency first enters the constituency close to Blackford bridge, which is the site of the busy main road between Bury and Manchester. Unless the road is in a tunnel at this point, it will presumably cross that main road by way of a viaduct, which would be highly visible, obviously intrusive, and massively detrimental to the surrounding housing, of which there is a great deal.

In common with my neighbour's constituency, it is then envisaged that the route will go through a golf course—in this case, through Bury golf club, which this year celebrates 100 years of existence and which is one of the finest playing courses in the north of England. The golf course outlook is well known by the Minister. Like my hon. Friend, I thank the Minister for taking the time to come to my constituency in the late summer to see the area for himself. He knows how beautiful it is and how much of a feature the golf course and open land is in Hollins and Unsworth. Even the most casual glance at a map will show what an oasis of green it is in a suburban landscape.

As then envisaged, the route will cross a road and head over fields, close to some properties, to join the existing M66 motorway and head out of my constituency. I share the concern of the villagers of Birch at the effect that it will have there.

As soon as the plans for the new motorway became known, in circumstances that I deplore, the concern of my constituents was obvious. Over 150 packed a small community centre in Hollins, and my postbag and surgery suggested their worries, which I share. Now is not the time or the place for a full debate of the issue; that will come at the full inquiry, but some pertinent questions will, I hope, dominate the arguments.

First, is the answer to congestion in urban areas always to build yet another road? Secondly, when will the great debate about road and rail in this country get a proper airing? I caution those who believe that rail is a simple answer to the problems of large-scale freight movement around the country; it is not. However, to my mind, the matter has never been properly and publicly addressed in such a way as to produce any consensus about the answer. We need to do that urgently—either to prove the claims for rail, to dismiss them or—most likely—to come to some agreement about the role of each which most ordinary straightforward people think acceptable. Thirdly, the problems of east-west traffic in this country cannot be treated as a series of isolated problems.

Perhaps we should consider the plight of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South on a much bigger stage, taking into account the possibilities of a northern route across the Pennines, and a more southerly one away from Merseyside towards the main north-south routes, in each case upgrading existing roads.

All these are wider issues, but of particular concern to my constituents. The more narrow issues of their homes, fields, and leisure facilities—and the destruction of them—will rightly occupy them over the next few months. This is a proposal with few if any benefits for my constituents as a whole and none whatsoever for those directly affected. It will be strongly opposed as much by the constituents in my part of Bury as by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South and his constituents.

11.13 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on securing this important debate. I thank him and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) for their kind remarks about my visit to their constituencies this September, which was helpful in the context of the discussion on this road.

I am glad to have the opportunity this evening to explain Government policy on roads in general, and the

latest position of the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road. It is fair to say that one cannot have a good quality environment, a good quality of life for our citizens and a prosperous community without effective communications. National trunk roads, as well as local roads, form a major element of that.

Major national roads serve the borough of Bury. The M62 motorway provides an important link across the Pennines. It connects the three conurbations of Merseyside, Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire, which in total comprise one fifth of the population of the United Kingdom. The route occcupies a fundamental place in our transportation network. Even on the isolated moorland section, the road carries over 70,000 vehicles every day of the year, and almost 30 per cent. of those are goods vehicles.

Just as important to the area is the M66 motorway to the east of Bury. At present, it provides a link between the A56 at Edenfield to the M62 at Middleton. On 11 March 1988, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the go-ahead for the extension of the M66 motorway to Denton. This section, when built, will complete the eastern section of the Manchester outer ring road. The northern, western and southern sides are formed by the M62 and M63 motorways.

While the Manchester outer ring road is not a ring road in the true sense—two thirds of the 2·5 million people in the area live outside it—its job is every bit as important as that of the M62. Locally, it provides a route between the major centres of population in the Greater Manchester area. When it is completed, it will certainly make travel between Bury and Stockport easier, and there will be a route to Manchester airport which avoids the congestion at Worsley. As my hon. Friends will recognise, good communications between these districts are important, because without them business cannot prosper and areas cannot develop to their full potential.

While completion of the ring road might appear to be the answer to all the problems, one major drawback would still remain. Because the northern side of the ring road is provided by the M62 motorway, that piece of motorway to the south of Bury has to satisfy two discrete functions: as a long-distance through route and as a more local distributor. Not surprisingly, conditions on the road are poor: indeed, to describe them as dreadful would not be an overstatement. Delays, frustration, congestion and accidents are all too commonplace. It is a road which causes stress to those who use it.

Weekday traffic flows on the M62 between junction 20 at Rochdale and junction 16 average 100,000 vehicles, with almost 140,000 vehicles per day on the busiest sections. The high levels of traffic are the result of increased levels of economic activity and prosperity. As this part of the network is already congested, further forecast traffic growth is certain to make conditions worse. Traffic figures are predicted to grow by up to one third by the end of the 1990s, and could well double by 2020. While uncertainty is associated with forecasts for so long a period ahead—the Department prepares high and low forecasts to test both ends of the range—we cannot simply put our heads in the sand and hope that the forecast traffic will disappear. Indeed, many of today's road problems are attributable to the fact that politicians did just that in the past.

Congestion on parts of the M62 will become worse, and a responsible Government must respond to it. Congestion reduces the efficiency and reliability of road transport for industry and increases the cost to consumers. It is also bad for road safety. Congestion harms the environment, because slow-moving vehicles burn more fuel and hence give off greater quantities of harmful emissions. Against that background, the Government announced in the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" a major expansion of the trunk road programme. Among the major new road schemes announced then was a proposal for the Greater Manchester western and northern relief road running from the M6 in Cheshire to the M62 and M66 east of Bury.

Before announcing the expansion of the road programme, the Government considered several ways of dealing with unacceptable levels of congestion, including the contribution that could be made by the railways, or, indeed, by other innovative ideas, such as the light rapid transit system soon to operate within the Greater Manchester area. We shall continue to invest heavily in public transport. Current investment is at record levels, but it is wishful thinking to believe that we can solve problems of congestion simply by investing more in public transport.

The vast differences in the scale and characteristics of the markets served by road and rail mean that even if rail traffic could be increased by 50 per cent., which would impose significant environmental penalties, road traffic would only be reduced by about 5 per cent., which is in line with an average year's growth. Public transport will not solve the needs of industry and business, or of people who use their cars regularly.

I fully understand my hon. Friends' anxiety about the effect of the Greater Manchester northern and western relief road within their constituencies. I commend them for the way in which they have spent so much time and effort on pursuing this concern on behalf of their constituents. As my hon. Friends know, our proposals for the sections of this scheme between the M56 and M66 are at the very first stage of what will necessarily be a lengthy process of development.

The initial investigations of options for any new road take place with minimal publicity. This is not because of a desire to deny anyone the opportunity to study and comment on what is being proposed: it is because, at this early, fact-finding stage, the consultants' investigations are extremely wide-ranging. Many options will be considered and eliminated in the search for a viable solution. To release details of routes or corridors under investigation can lead to widespread and unnecessary blight, for which there is no statutory remedy. As my hon. Friends have pointed out, that, sadly, is the present position with this relief road.

Our confidential consultations, which form a standard part of the fact-finding process, have led a leak of information. My hon. Friends and people in the area are well aware that that leak emanated from a local councillor who is the prospective Labour party candidate for Bury, South. Whatever the motives for the leak, it has done a great disservice to the community. It has led directly to the blighting of properties and to disruption within the community.

In assessing the options for dealing with traffic congestion, one of the obvious first steps is to look at improvements to the existing road. That is why we have done so. Without the new road, we should have to consider carefully closing several junctions on the M62. Although it would help the flow of traffic on the motorway, it would

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

have a severe impact on the local road network. The area would suffer increasing congestion with worsening conditions for residents.

I should like to say something about the next stages in the development of the scheme. I was asked specifically when we could go out to public consultation. I can do no better than to say that it will be as soon as possible. I understand that the delay is causing frustrations, as a direct result of the premature disclosure of confidential information. However, it would be wholly wrong for the Department to publish proposals which have not been properly worked out, do not contain the best information based on detailed consultation which has taken place informally and confidentially, and which have not taken into account the various route options.

My hon. Friends will be pleased to hear that that is necessarily a large-scale and wide-ranging process. It means that we will not be able to publish the proposals for consultation before next spring. I must warn my hon. Friends that it may be later than that. It depends on the progress made in the interim. Once the proposals are produced for consultation, there will be ample opportunity for people to visit exhibitions, ask questions and present their views. I can reassure the House that no decision will be taken on any route to be advanced until public consultation has been held.

The consultation process is non-statutory and gives people an early opportunity to have a say in the development of the scheme. At a later stage, when orders are published, they will be able to exercise their statutory rights of objection. At that stage, the matter would be considered by an independent inspector at a local public inquiry.

I fully understand the concerns of local people that have been put to me so ably by my hon. Friends. I hope that they may be reassured as to the opportunities for public input into our proposals. A balance must be struck between the positive advantages that any new road offers for the relief of congestion and the impact of that road on the environment and the community. As time goes by. I hope that my hon. Friends become satisfied that we have got that balance right.

The issue of consultation relating to new road schemes is not a party political one. It might help if I reminded the House of the contents of the "Report on the Review of Highway Inquiry Procedures", published in April 1978 under the previous Labour Government. Paragraph 57 of the conclusions of that report states:

"It is nevertheless inevitable that the benefits of a new road will generally be more widely distributed, and thus less apparent, than its disadvantages. Thus, although the most careful consideration is given to the social and environmental effects in the immediate locality of a proposed new road it is hardly possible to build it at reasonable cost without causing inconvenience and disruption in its immediate vicinity. The Government is concerned that those who are affected in this way should be treated with the greatest possible fairness. An equitable and efficient public inquiry procedure is essential."

That was the policy under the previous Labour Government, and it is our policy. We would not have had this debate and the people in my hon. Friends' constituencies would not be alarmed but for the premature disclosure of information that should never have been disclosed and which had been made available on a strictly confidential basis.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): That is not true, and the Minister knows it.

Mr. Chope: The hon. Gentleman may barrack me, but he would be unable to persuade people in that area that their alarm has been caused by anything other than the irresponsible behaviour of someone who has strong political motives.

Mr. Lewis: The Minister knows how the information got out.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chope: I am sorry that the debate should end on a note of acrimony, but that is a fair account of what has happened. The Department's best endeavours to proceed in an orderly and responsible fashion have been frustrated and thwarted by the irresponsible behaviour of one individual.

I assure my hon. Friends that we shall come forward as soon as possible for consultation on the proposals. At that and subsequent stages, I know that my hon. Friends will act as vigorously as they always do on behalf of their constituents' interests.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 18 December 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

STANDARD LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 17 January.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Self-governing Hospitals

1. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the views of Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte commissioned by his Department on the self-governing trust implications from St. James's hospital, Leeds and Leeds general infirmary; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): No, Sir. The appraisals are confidential documents prepared to help inform my assessment of proposed national health service trusts.

Mr. Battle: That answer is most disappointing because the budget submissions from Leeds general infirmary and St. James's are based on massive underestimates of inflation and on land sales and a large increase in private beds, and it is widely believed that a third of the applicants for self-governing trust status are already massively overspending on their capital budgets. Why cannot the Department make available to the House a full appraisal including all the financial facts, so that the Government can be fully publicly accountable for budget decisions in this crucial area?

Mr. Waldegrave: We are fully accountable and I stand accountable to the House. A range of different advice was offered to us and there would be no more point in publishing the bits that the hon. Gentleman wants than there would any other bits. They were my decisions, taken against the background of the information available to me.

Mr. Batiste: But is not the reality that those two great hospitals, St. James's and Leeds general infirmary, are among the largest in Europe and that the only way in which they can fulfil their potential and deliver the best service to their patients—which after all, is what it is all about—is by stripping away excessive layers of bureaucracy? In today's world, is not self-governing status within the NHS the best way of achieving what really matters, which is patient care?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend knows these hospitals well and he puts his finger on the fundamental point. Many of the people who object to the return of those hospitals to management from within the hospital probably objected when the bureaucratic system was set up from which they are now escaping.

Family Health Service

3. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to review the annual budgeting system of family health service authorities.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): From next year, it will be for regional health authorities to determine the allocations which are given to family health services authorities and to ensure that they have adequate internal financial arrangements.

Mr. French: I accept in principle the idea of annual budgeting by family health services authorities, but does my hon. Friend accept that the establishment of new doctors' surgeries, particularly in urban areas, requires some co-ordination between the purchase of land and the design and construction of buildings? Does not a rigid annual system with a strict limit on the 12-month budgeting period work to the detriment of the creation of new surgeries?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has a longstanding constituency interest in the arrangements for distributing the substantial resources for the premises improvement scheme. More than £6 million was spent last year on such schemes in his family health services area and he will know that 67 of the 87 practices there have benefited. However, it is important to continue to ensure that the vast resources put into practitioner services are properly and effectively distributed. If there are aspects that we can look at more carefully, we shall certainly do so.

Mr. Kennedy: Given the significant contractual arrangements in the family doctor service, particularly during the past year or 18 months, and the anxiety that was expressed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House about the likely impact of some of those changes on employment prospects for female general practitioners, what evidence does the Minister have of the continuing employment on a part-time or full-time basis of female general practitioners?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to know that I share his concern that we should continue to use women doctors in the NHS as well as we can. Half the medical students now are female and they should have an important part to play. The general practitioner's contract has meant that the specialties that many women doctors traditionally took up are particularly popular. We are watching the way in which women doctors are used. For the first time they can be employed as part-time principals, but they have expressed concern about the way in which they are likely to be treated by some male principals—*[Interruption.]* I have regular meetings with the organisations representing women doctors to ensure that we do not need to issue further guidance and that their skills are being fully used. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Could these Christmas greetings below the Gangway be exchanged outside the Chamber?

NHS Trusts

4. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made in publishing the budgets of national health service trusts.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): There are no plans to publish NHS trust budgets.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I fully accept my hon. Friend's comments. He may be interested to learn that, owing to the illegibility of my profession's handwriting, what should have appeared as "publicising benefits" has appeared on the Order Paper as "publishing budgets". Despite that, will he confirm that he will encourage national health service trusts to apply some of their budgets to promoting the benefits of NHS trusts to our constituents, notwithstanding the pessimism of my trade union, the British Medical Association?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend draws attention to one of the benefits of computerising prescriptions—they will in future be more legible. He is also right to stress the importance to patients of the improvements that come from trusts. The Kingston Hospital Trust, which serves my hon. Friend's constituency, was recently approved by my right hon. Friend. It promises to set specific waiting times for patients, to open evening and weekend clinics where there is substantial demand and to set down and follow discharge procedures so that GPs are fully involved in patient discharges. Those are the sort of improvements in the quality of service that can come from an imaginatively run trust.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Although the Minister has made it clear today that he will not publish NHS trust budgets, will he make public the full costs of wining and dining those concerned with the opting-out process? Can he justify the expenditure of £10,000 last Tuesday night on a Banqueting house booze-up for those concerned with opting out at a time when a health authority such as Wakefield has had to close 100 beds because of a lack of Government funding?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman asks a question and then establishes that it would be otiose to answer it because he already knows the answer. What is important is to establish the benefits that come from improving the management of NHS hospitals through their establishment as trusts. The accountability that matters is accountability to patients through the contracting system and the improvement in quality of service that it will provide.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Will my hon. Friend underline the point that, whether it is benefits or budgets, the role of the Audit Commission has been significantly enhanced by the National Health Service and Community Care Act? Will he ensure that the Department gives every possible support to the work of the Audit Commission, which does its best to ensure the best value for money for patients from the much-enhanced sums that we are now spending on the health service?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right. The Audit Commission has an important part to play in drawing attention to the opportunities, through more effective management, to obtain better value for money for the taxpayer and a better quality of health for the patient. That should be the objective of us all.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the Minister aware that there is some anxiety among social workers that there may not be adequate provision in national health service trust hospitals for social workers, bearing in mind the fact that we are trying to move people into the community and that social workers are employed by local authorities? Is he satisfied that the budgets provide adequately for such social services?

Mr. Dorrell: I am satisfied that the contracting system provides the mechanism whereby district health authorities will be able to provide the seamless robe that is essential to proper health and social care, to ensure that an individual benefits first from health care, then from community care and then from social care support when appropriate. The contracting system provides the mechanism for ensuring that all that is in place.

Health Inequalities

5. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he has taken to reduce health inequalities.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a fundamental objective of our national health service reforms to give patients, wherever they live in the United Kingdom and regardless of how well off they are, better health care and greater choice.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister agree that it is now 10 years since the Black committee report on inequalities in health? Can he explain why, in those 10 years, inequalities in health have got worse instead of better? Is not that a damning indictment of the abject failure of the Government to tackle the problems?

Mr. Waldegrave: The thing to remember is that everyone's health has got better in the past 10 years, as it did in the previous 10 years. Life expectancy has increased by about two years for everyone. I am not going to say that our Government have abolished inequalities in health care any more than the Labour Government did when they were in power. However, we are introducing some powerful new mechanisms that will help. For example, the GP contract, although it has been unpopular with some GPs, is raising the level of immunology—for example, child immunology—in the places where it was worst. When Opposition Members say that they are going to repeal that contract, will they be satisfied with lowering the levels of child immunology again?

Dame Jill Knight: My right hon. Friend may have omitted to mention another important part of the reduction in inequalities with regard to the contract, as elderly people now have regular checks, which was not previously the case. Can he give us any information about that?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. That, too, is an important weapon to help us move away from those problems, which occur throughout the world. Another relevant matter is that, under the new financial system, health districts will for the first time have the duty to

produce a proper health plan for their area, taking into account the problems of social deprivation that they may face. That should also help.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that under the health plan, school children in Strathclyde are receiving letters telling them that they will no longer get eye tests in school and that they will have to go to hospital? Is that the type of planning that he wishes to see?

Mr. Waldegrave: What I am aware of—although I hope that I do not embarrass my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland by saying this—is that the situation in Scotland at least shows that there is no simple connection between resources and health, because Scotland spends rather more than we do in England per head, but has no better health statistics.

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite the millions and millions that the Government have rightly put into the national health service, regional and local health authorities are at best muscle-bound and at worst insensitive in much of their public relations? Will he bear that in mind and try to do something about it?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is important that health districts and regions should have clearly designated spokesmen to answer questions that it is legitimate for people to ask them. I think that I should be criticised in the House if I encouraged them to launch large public relations campaigns. However, I take my hon. Friend's point. There must always be a clear contact point for inquiries from the public at district and regional level.

Self-governing Hospitals

6. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations he has received over self-governing hospitals.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received many representations about national health service trusts.

Mr. Winnick: I can well imagine it. Is it of no concern to the Government that there is no public support for these substantial changes? For example, in my borough, at the district general hospital, there is overwhelming opposition to what is being proposed. Why are the Government pursuing this path of Thatcherite dogma, instead of dealing with the financial crisis in the health service? It would be far better to deal with the financial crisis, which is due to underfunding, than to gamble with people's health by making unnecessary changes.

Mr. Waldegrave: I spent a large part of yesterday at the Royal Free hospital, where I met many people—doctors, nurses and health service workers—who are strongly in favour of the changes. They may all have been passionate Thatcherites, but I am not sure that they were. Some may even have voted for the Labour party. I think that the hon. Gentleman will find that there is growing support. One should consider the hon. Gentleman's area, where the National Union of Public Employees sent out 2,700 ballot forms. Four hundred came back and 100 were actually in favour of the trust—I suppose that they went to the wrong people. It is really not very serious.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: When considering the representations made to him by hospitals or authorities that want to opt out and become self-governing trusts within the national health service, does my right hon. Friend give more weight to the views of members of the area health authorities, consultants and other doctors, nurses, paramedics, other staff and patients, or to those of the rather remote chairmen of the regional health authorities?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should probably attach the most weight to the quality of the submission made by the hospital or other unit in question. Those are the people who know most about a hospital and whose future rests with it. If they present good proposals—as they did this year—it is principally to those proposals that we respond, although we also take advice from the districts and regions.

Mr. Ashton: Although the Secretary of State keeps saying that there will be consultation, he never announces what sort of consultation it will be and with whom it will take place. Who will he consult before the trusts are set up—the patients, the staff or the public? If he is not satisfied with the NUPE ballot, why does not he organise a ballot himself? Is he aware that no consultation has taken place with Bassetlaw hospital, except that which I have tried to organise, with no help at all?

Mr. Waldegrave: Ballots are not at all the right way to improve the system of management in a great service such as the national health service. We have been trying to carry out the statutory duties imposed on us by the Act that was passed earlier this year and, above all—as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton)—to study the representations made to us by the hospitals themselves.

Mr. Paice: Following the undoubted success of hospital trusts, will my right hon. Friend find a mechanism whereby hospitals that are not currently part of the NHS—for instance, former military hospitals such as the one in my constituency from which the RAF is to withdraw—can become independent trusts within the NHS and thus build on the success of this initiative?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know the hospital to which my hon. Friend refers very well; indeed, I talked about it to the regional chairman and officers when I was in Cambridge last Friday. I am not sure that the establishment of a trust is the most likely solution in that instance, but the regional authority is willing to consider any financial proposals that make sense and could save the hospital.

Mr. Robin Cook: Can we tempt the Secretary of State to tell us something about the independent representations that he commissioned from Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte? Can he confirm that that organisation concluded that only 14 of the 56 applications that he approved were financially sound? If that was not its conclusion, why does the right hon. Gentleman keep refusing to publish its report? Should not the public have the right to know the figures and should not Parliament have the right to debate them?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the nature of the process. During the summer, Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte and many other advisers produced a variety of advice, much of which was passed back to the trust units and altered in the course of dialogue

with them. It is as futile to ask for that particular piece of paper as it is to ask for thousands of others that were made available to me.

Prestwich Hospital

7. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the chairman of the North West regional health authority to discuss the future of Prestwich hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: The future development of hospital facilities at Prestwich hospital is a matter for the local health authority.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my hon. Friend aware of the widespread opposition among my constituents to plans to develop a hypermarket on part of the hospital site? Will he join me in urging the chairman of the regional authority to tell his counterpart in Salford to withdraw the plan and thus save my constituents from serious environmental and commercial damage?

Mr. Dorrell: As my hon. Friend knows, this is a planning matter that falls within the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Nevertheless, I cannot be blind to the fact that the £12·5 million that is in prospect if the planning proposal goes ahead would allow for a £6·5 million investment in new regional mental illness facilities on the Prestwich site and a further £6 million to improve provision for the mentally ill in the community. At a time when we are constantly—and rightly—pressed to provide investment to improve facilities for the mentally ill, that is a major advantage to which, as I have said, I cannot be blind.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that that hospital in Prestwich and other hospitals throughout the north-west region and Cumbria send patients to St. Paul's eye hospital in Liverpool for jag laser treatment? Is he further aware that that hospital is also under threat and that it is causing deep concern throughout the north-west? Will he take some action to ensure that people in Liverpool, my constituents and people throughout the region are satisfied about the future of those services?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman has got it completely wrong. The "threat" in Prestwich is that there should be a £12·5 million investment programme to improve hospital facilities and facilities for care in the community to provide for the mentally ill. That is the sort of threat that we want to see to develop an improving health service for all patients in the health service and especially, in this context, for the mentally ill.

Out-patient Departments

8. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what initiatives have been or are being undertaken to improve out-patient departments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are committed to improving out-patient departments. We have recently issued advice on the physical environment, questions of skill mix and on appointment systems to reduce waiting times at out-patient departments. In addition, we are funding 10 demonstration projects as part of our quality initiative, addressed particularly to out-patient departments.

Mr. Stevens: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer and for the initiatives that have been taken to improve out-patient facilities. The improvements that have been made over the years in North Warwickshire district health authority are very much appreciated. How many new out-patient attendances were there in 1979 and how does that figure compare with those today?

Mrs. Bottomley: There has been a considerable increase in the number of people coming to out-patient departments. There were 36 million out-patient attendances last year, which is 7 per cent. higher than in 1979. In my hon. Friend's health authority, the figures have increased by 20 per cent. over the past four years.

Mr. Cousins: What out-patient facilities does the Minister plan for the over-85s? Six old people's homes have closed in Newcastle as a result of poll tax capping and two long-stay geriatric hospitals are closing as a result of hospital cuts, with the inmates and patients being put up for auction. Clearly, we shall need a lot more facilities at out-patient departments in hospitals to deal with the consequences of that, so what plans does the Minister have?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will know that he has a first-rate health authority in Newcastle which is addressing precisely those problems. Its work on implementing community care is going very well. The point that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a moment ago about the need for general practitioners to offer their patients who are over 75 an annual visit to check on their welfare and well-being will also help to improve the quality of care. We are seeing improved services for the elderly. Our community care proposals will challenge health and local authorities to work together successfully to ensure that there is comprehensive and integrated cover.

Mr. Tredinnick: Has not the treatment of out-patients improved immeasurably over the past 10 years? Does my hon. Friend agree that the number of out-patients being treated at the moment in Leicester is at a record level?

Mrs. Bottomley: I think that I can, almost without doubt, confirm the Leicestershire figure, but my hon. Friend will understand that I shall write to him if I am wrong. Out-patient departments are the interface between community services, general practitioners and hospitals. We are concerned that a recent survey found that 15 per cent. of people with out-patient appointments failed to show up in one area. We must be sure that our appointment systems are effective and that people are well treated when they reach the out-patient departments. We must also ensure that we are making proper use of skill mix and that the quality of the environment and experience is as good as it can be. We shall issue further advice to health authorities in the new year on the basis of the lessons that we have learnt from the first six demonstration projects.

Psychiatric Patients

9. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to announce Her Majesty's Government's policies for introducing assessment for patients leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals and going into the community.

Mr. Dorrell: Guidance on the introduction of assessment for patients leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals was issued to health and local authorities on 10 September.

Mr. Clarke: In view of the great distress that has been caused to many patients who are leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals supposedly to go into community care, which simply does not exist, when precisely will the Government implement section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986? Does the Minister recall that the former Secretary of State for Health announced, after over three years of negotiations with local councils, that the Government's National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and their provisions for community care transcended section 7, and that once that had been monitored, the Government would decide what they were going to do? Now that the Government have abandoned their proposals for community care until 1993, what will happen to the patients? Is that community care in the 1990s, or is it saying to those patients, "Look forward to cardboard homes and cardboard hopes"?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong. We have not abandoned community care; we are committed to implementing it. Furthermore, we are committed to implementing community care for mentally ill people on an accelerated timetable. The mental illness specific grant will make available £30 million of expenditure from next April. Capital approvals to local authorities will make available a further £10 million from next April. The capital loans fund has provided £10 million this year to invest in reprovision for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people. The initiative that I announced in July for homeless mentally ill people provides £5 million for that client group. Approximately £55 million has been made available by the Government in the current year to invest in improving the facilities available to treat mentally ill people in the community.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I warmly welcome the Government's proposals for improved assessment of people leaving long-term psychiatric hospitals and, more important, the provision of a key worker for each patient to co-ordinate the services available to him, but will the Government support and promote the additional voluntary service of Citizens Advocacy, a branch of which is in my constituency, which provides a friend—not a professional—to help formerly mentally ill or mentally handicapped people reintegrate into the community?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend rightly draws attention to an interesting and useful contribution to care for mentally ill people. I welcome the initiative that he referred to and the opportunities that it represents. The care programme approach that I announced on 10 September provides, for the first time, an ordered framework to assess the needs of each mentally ill individual and to ensure that they are met in the community. My hon. Friend referred to advocacy schemes, which have a part to play in that process.

Mr. Rooker: Does not the Minister appreciate that it is the belief of millions of carers and the cared-for that the Government have abandoned their community care programme? Sticking to the narrow confines of the question, does the Minister accept that the guidance for the assessment must be much wider than that which is published? How does it meet, for example, the criticism of the MIND survey, which mentioned the lack of choice and dignity, the lack of keys and the lack of the chance to keep pets? The survey in the west midlands found that virtually no social activity is offered in the private residential sector. How can it meet the problems that are caused by the lack of co-ordination between health authorities, social service departments and the planning authorities? In our large cities, hostels for mentally ill and mentally handicapped people are located next to another hostel, across the road from another hostel or round the corner from another hostel. Care in a community of hostels is not what patients or their families want.

Mr. Dorrell: It may be true that there is a belief in the field that community care has been abandoned, but it is quite simply wrong. When it has repeatedly been stated to be wrong, it does no one any good for the hon. Gentleman to repeat it from the Dispatch Box. As regards the suggestion that the care programme approach is too narrow, that was out to consultation throughout most of the summer, which offered an opportunity for those in the field to argue for the widening that the hon. Gentleman advocated. He did not do so and most of the people in the field did not do so at that time. The guidance that we published on 10 September represents the first structured attempt to ensure that the needs of an individual mentally ill person are assessed and that effective machinery is put in place to support that individual in the community.

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend carefully consider respite care for the relatives or friends of psychiatric patients who return home? As well as the carers of psychiatric patients, many other carers need a break and we must cater for their needs in future programmes.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We recognise that respite care is an important part of a proper programme for community care for psychiatric patients and we shall ensure that provision is made.

Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport

10. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will visit Stepping Hill hospital, Stockport to discuss staffing levels.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to visit Stepping Hill hospital. Staffing levels in hospitals are a matter for local decision.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister join me in congratulating Mr. Graham Pink on having the courage to describe so movingly in *The Guardian* and on television the major problems faced in Stepping Hill on the night shift on geriatric wards? Will the hon. Gentleman condemn the

district health authority for suspending Mr. Pink for his whistle-blowing activities rather than solving the problems at that hospital? Does he agree that that is deplorable?

Mr. Dorrell: No, Sir. I shall not join the hon. Gentleman in congratulating Mr. Pink. The trouble with Mr. Pink's allegations is that he does not have the support of his colleagues, the clinicians in the hospital or the health authority's chief nursing officer; nor can it be established on any of the published criteria that his allegations are justified.

Mr. [illegible]: The best way to improve hospital services in [illegible] is to amalgamate Stockport infirmary with [illegible] hospital, which are both in my constituency. Is my hon. Friend aware that the consultant in charge of the accident and emergency department at the infirmary has been pushing for that amalgamation for years, yet it is opposed by the Labour party because of cynical, short-term opportunism? The Labour party is prepared to put lives at risk to buy short-term popularity. At Stockport infirmary there is no blood bank or intensive care unit and there are facilities to deal only with broken bones and ear, nose and throat problems. Unless a person suffers from such problems, he has to be taken by ambulance to Stepping Hill hospital, down one of the busiest roads in the north of England. That is the Labour party's wish.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes his point powerfully, but he is not quite right in every detail. Although the Labour party here opposes amalgamation, the National Union of Public Employees supports it, so my hon. Friend has support from a wider section of the community than he might have expected. He is right to draw attention to the improvement that can come from the investment programme to which he referred. I hope that it will be possible to provide for that within a reasonable time scale.

Health Service Financing

11. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet the chairman of the National Association of Health Authorities to discuss the financing of the health service.

Mr. Waldegrave: I look forward to meeting him on 31 January when I shall speak at his association's annual reception. I am sure that we shall discuss financial matters there.

Mr. Hayes: Is my right hon. Friend greatly encouraged by the warm welcome with which his speech last week was received by the National Association of Health Authorities and the other caring professions? Coupled with the clear commitment of my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to cut junior doctors' working hours, does my right hon. Friend believe that that shows without doubt that the Government believe in a health service for everyone, financed primarily out of taxation and free at the point of delivery?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I should like to take the opportunity provided by his question to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health and to her colleagues [illegible] Dr. Diana Walford and Dr. Stephen Hunter, who have achieved what will turn out to be an historic breakthrough on the long-standing matter of junior doctors' hours.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State launch an urgent investigation into the funding crisis gripping the national health service in Bradford? Does he understand that, because of that cash crisis, there is widespread dismay at the fact that the Bradford NHS trust has gone ahead and still greater dismay at the fact that the chairman is a millionaire business man from Wakefield who knows nothing about the NHS in Bradford and still less about the health care needs of the people of Bradford?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is astonishing that the Labour party should regret the fact that some of the best business men want to give their skills to the health service. That action will benefit the people of Bradford and that principle will benefit us all more widely.

Mr. Walden: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although many Conservative Members are entirely behind the reforms that were introduced by his predecessor and which he carried through, in several areas—not least the Aylesbury Vale health authority and Stoke Mandeville hospital—a serious situation is developing as the hospital seeks to make ends meet before the new regime comes in next spring? As a result, there have been serious cuts in the number of operations performed. Will my right hon. Friend look at the overall costs of writing off the debts of those areas that are in serious financial difficulty, before the new regime comes in next spring, so that they can start with a clean slate?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is understood that some of the London districts will not have to remove their deficits before the beginning of the new system. However, it would be a bad managerial signal to allow those that have overspent their budgets again to pre-empt resources that should be available to the whole of the health service, including those that have achieved their budgets.

Mr. Robin Cook: Hon. Members of all parties have pointed out to the Secretary of State the immense pressure on health authorities from the obligation to remove their deficits. May I remind him that three years ago this week, one of his predecessors found an extra £100 million for a similar crisis in the hospital service? As beds are now closing faster than they did three years ago and as waiting lists are now longer than they were three years ago, why cannot the Secretary of State do the same? Why cannot the Government, who have written off the debts of every privatised industry, now write off the deficits of our hospitals?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that it has been a long-standing objective to bring districts back into balance. That is the right thing to do and we shall continue to do it, although, as I said, there will be some flexibility in London. That remains the position.

Transplants

12. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advances have been made in transplant treatments in the last 11 years.

Mr. Waldegrave: Over the past 11 years, there have been unprecedented advances in the number of organs

transplanted, in the development of new forms of transplant and in improving the results of transplants. The Government remain wholly committed to the organ transplant programme.

Mr. Dunn: Although I acknowledge that the United Kingdom's record on transplants is excellent, will the Secretary of State confirm the steps being taken by his Department to overcome the shortage in the supply of donor organs?

Mr. Waldegrave: The main thing that the House can do is to redouble its appeals to people to carry donor cards. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for paying tribute to what has been done. It is an example of a wholly new health service activity—an almost completely new activity—in the past 10 years. There was virtually none of this under the previous Labour Government, which shows the development of services that we have been able to achieve.

Mr. Galbraith: It will come as a disappointment to the House that the Government's only contribution to increasing the number of donor organs is to increase the number of donor cards carried by individuals. Although that is successful to a limited extent, it is not proving sufficient to deal with the continuing problem of the shortage of donor organs. Have the Government no other plans to increase the number of donor organs available for transplantation?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman quite likely knows, various other matters are under consideration. The United Kingdom transplant service, which is funded centrally from my Department, will continue to receive our support. We have considered alternative schemes, such as the opting-out proposal, which has been raised in some European countries. It has not found much favour with us and, from the expression on the hon. Gentleman's face, it does not find much favour with him.

Speech Therapy

13. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his plans for the future of the speech therapy profession.

Mr. Virginia Bottomley: Speech therapy services have expanded and developed considerably over the past 10 years. We are working with the profession on plans for further improvements.

Mr. Jones: Will the Minister acknowledge that, despite those efforts, there is still a chronic shortage of properly qualified speech therapists to treat communication-handicapped patients within the health service? Will she further acknowledge that urgent action is needed to increase the recruitment and remuneration in this valuable service and that the way forward is not to establish a tier of partially trained therapists acting as fully trained therapists within the service, but to put all the effort behind fully and properly qualified speech therapists?

Mrs. Bottomley: There has been an 82 per cent. increase in qualified speech therapists over the past 10 years and they are better paid than they used to be. However, I recognise the hon. Gentleman's point that there are rising expectations of the number of tasks that speech therapists can rightly perform. It is important to consider the skill mix and to ensure that qualified speech therapists are used for the tasks for which their skills are necessary. We are also carrying forward plans for clinical audit. We have regular discussions with the College of Speech Therapists and we will continue to consider all the points to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Jessel: In view of the standard of some of their speeches, will my hon. Friend provide speech therapy for the Labour party? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: That is a little bit wide.

Mrs. Bottomley: I shall ask the Department's therapy officer to look at that aspect.

Waiting Lists

14. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further steps the Government intend to take to reduce hospital waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS Management Executive is to agree tough targets for the reduction of long waits with all 14 regional health authorities. We are also continuing the special waiting list fund to help health authorities reduce the number of patients who wait excessively.

Mr. Wigley: As the ENT in-patient waiting list in my area is 98 weeks and worsening, whereas ophthalmology, which has been given additional resources, has a reducing waiting list, will the Minister accept the general thesis that if more resources were given to hospitals, the waiting lists would lessen?

Mrs. Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is on the Treasury Bench and I know that he will note the hon. Gentleman's points. The numbers waiting for a long time have reduced. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that 50 per cent. of hospital admissions are immediate. The average wait for those who come in off the waiting list is six weeks and we have seen great progress on the numbers who have to wait for over a year. We have made it clear that we want to take more time and care over reducing waiting times. At a time of increasing activity, it would be wrong for the hon. Gentleman not to recognise the progress that is being made.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Ms. Quin: Can the Prime Minister explain how the creation of hereditary baronetcies fits in with his idea of the classless society?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady cannot ask about the royal prerogative. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] It is a long convention and it is outside our rules. The hon. Lady must try a different tack.

Ms. Quin: Is it true that the Prime Minister recommended the creation of a hereditary baronetcy? If that is the case——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is just as bad.

Q2. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows that we do not bring the royal family into our discussions here. —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. King: Does my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is absolutely disgraceful behaviour. The House knows the rules about this.

Mr. King: Does my right hon. Friend share the enthusiasm of Conservative Members for the European Community's decision to lift sanctions against new investment in South Africa? Does he share my belief that only through that sort of investment can we bring peace and harmony to South Africa? Does he also share the belief of Oliver Tambo, expressed in his statement at the weekend, that the only people who wish to maintain comprehensive sanctions against South Africa are extreme elements of the African National Congress and the British Labour party?

The Prime Minister: The European Council's agreement over the weekend to lift the ban on new investment in South Africa was a positive step for which Britain has been pressing for some time. I hope that other Governments will soon follow the European Community's example. The very great changes that we have seen in South Africa in recent years have been welcome. In due course, I hope that they will be able to continue and that we will be able properly to welcome South Africa back wholeheartedly into the African and world community.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the number of homes being built in Britain is at a lower level than at any time since the first world war?

The Prime Minister: I confirm to the right hon. Gentleman that over the recent few years more people have moved into home ownership and we have had a higher quality and standard of housing than ever before.

Mr. Kinnock: I wonder why the Prime Minister is refusing to answer a plain question. I hear what he says, but, as the Government have cut £6 billion from housing investment and imposed the highest mortgage rates in all of history, does he not realise that the Government are responsible for not only the loss of homes but vastly increased homelessness?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will find that his facts are incorrect. On the quality, nature and quantity of housing, I am happy to match the record of this Government against that of any previous Government.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister then acknowledge, first, that during the time that he has been Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer and now Prime Minister, the Government have made huge cuts in housing budgets? Will he confirm that under this Government mortgage rates have been higher for longer than ever before and that while the Government have halved housing investment they have doubled homelessness?

The Prime Minister: In his list the right hon. Gentleman wholly overlooks the remarkable changes made to the voluntary housing movement, housing associations and action on homelessness.

Mr. Ridley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the chairman of the Bundesbank, Herr Pöhl, said the other day that interest rates should be set according to monetary conditions and should not be used to affect the exchange rate? Is he aware that many of my hon. Friends agree with that view and that if we use interest rates to maintain the exchange rate, we are likely to have a wider and deeper recession than we need to control inflation?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend knows, there is a clear relationship between interest rate and exchange rate policy. My right hon. Friend referred to the governor of the Bundesbank. The deutschmark is also part of the exchange rate mechanism and Germany has done rather well as a result of that.

Mr. Ashdown: Did the Prime Minister read the comments made at the weekend by the Governor of the Bank of England? He said that the Prime Minister's decision, when Chancellor, to cut interest rates in advance of the Tory party conference meant that his party gained a political dividend too early, for which jobs and industry are now paying.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should read all of what the Governor said. He made it clear that the matter was fully discussed with him and that a joint decision was reached.

Sir Marcus Fox: Setting aside the argument that shops should obey the law—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not certain that that is a very good start.

Sir Marcus Fox: Is my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister aware that there is a huge demand among shoppers and traders alike and an urgent need to allow people to shop on Sundays? Does he agree that the present law should be reformed?

The Prime Minister: The present law on Sunday trading is widely felt to be unsatisfactory, as my hon. Friend made clear. We tried to reform the law, but on that occasion our proposals did not find favour with the House. I can well understand the impatience of hon. Members about the state of the Sunday trading law.

Hon. Members: Obey the law.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: A great deal of the Sunday trading law is bizarre and the time may well be approaching when the Sunday observance lobby should sit down with the retail trade to see whether an acceptable compromise can be reached. As the House knows, there is an acceptable law in Scotland which has not wrecked the special significance of Sunday. I should welcome such a law in England.

Q3. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: Does the Prime Minister recognise at this time of seasonal goodwill the mortgage misery of millions of people who are paying considerably more than would otherwise be the case because of the Government's financial mismanagement during the past few years? Does he recognise that in the north-west an average mortgage of £34,800 is costing £110 a month more than it would have done two and a half years ago?

The Prime Minister: I understand clearly the problems faced by many people with high mortgage rates. The underlying necessity is to get the inflation rate down, and interest rate policy is a necessary part of that.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: Is my right hon. Friend aware that every week many thousands of British animals are sent to antiquated European slaughterhouses and that they arrive hungary and thirsty, battered and damaged? Will he please take steps to stop this needless cruelty to and suffering of animals?

The Prime Minister: A great deal of that is unattractive. There are laws covering the circumstances in which such exports take place and I shall examine them personally, as my hon. Friend suggests.

Q4. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: What comfort can the Prime Minister give to my 89-year-old constituent, Mrs. Phyllis Smith, who, like thousands of other elderly people who live in rest homes, can no longer get free incontinence aids from the national health service? What would he advise her to do with bills for £179, such as this one, when she is on income support and cannot afford to buy these aids which are basic essentials of human dignity?

The Prime Minister: The hon. and learned Gentleman is as aware as anyone in the House that both the general level of provision and the specific level of income support are higher today than at any previous time.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his calm and intelligent approach to the European summit and the negotiations has aroused widespread admiration in my constituency and across the country? My constituents recognise, as he recognises, that we have everything to gain from the negotiations, working out together with our European partners solutions to the many problems that face the European Community.

The Prime Minister: I am certainly grateful to my hon. Friend. It is clear within the EC that on some matters we have a distinct view and we shall sustain it. On those occasions we shall in future, as so often in the past, win the arguments.

Q5. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: The Prime Minister has spoken of creating a classless society. What sort of classless society will it be if, as forecast, unemployment once again goes beyond the 2 million mark? Why does he not at least take the advice of the Confederation of British Industry and reduce interest rates without delay?

The Prime Minister: It is because we are determined to bring inflation down and keep it down, not to bring it down artificially at the risk of a greater problem later.

Q6. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stewart: Recently, the chairman of British Coal announced record financial profits—the best for 13 years. Recently, our miners produced an all-time productivity record of more than 5 tonnes per man-shift. Recently, the mineworkers' pension scheme announced an increase in pensions of more than 15 per cent. Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate all those people on making those records attainable?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly happy to do so. British Coal and its work force deserve great credit for their achievements, particularly for their recent record level of productivity. It will provide a firm foundation for the future of the coal industry.

Mr. Mallon: Nobody can fail to have been impressed by the Prime Minister's stated conviction that everyone in this country has a right to his or her place in the sun and to equal opportunity. As we approach Christmas, will the right hon. Gentleman ponder on the plight of the Birmingham Six, who face their 16th year in prison for a crime that many believe they have not committed? When he ponders on that, will he join with me in my anger at the words of an Appeal Court judge yesterday——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mallon: —when he said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows that that case is sub judice.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, a date is fixed for the hearing and in advance of that there is no more I can say at the moment.

Q7. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Couchman: During his busy day, will my right hon. Friend contact the commander of the British Forces in the Gulf and convey to him the best wishes and prayers of hon. Members in all parts of the House for all our troops as we rise for Christmas? Will he assure General de la Billière that our hopes remain high that Saddam Hussein will withdraw his forces from Kuwait without the need for further bloodshed?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in those wishes. We owe a tremendous debt to our forces in the Gulf and I am sure that, without exception, we wish them a happy Christmas. I look forward to going out to visit them very shortly after Christmas.

As for the solution of the Gulf crisis, that rests squarely with Saddam Hussein. Time is running out for him. The international community has made it clear that force will be used if Iraq has not withdrawn totally and unconditionally from Kuwait by 15 January. I hope that Saddam Hussein will take that very seriously indeed.

Q8. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 18 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: As the Government's economic policy is leading to only one consequence, which is higher unemployment, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman to ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that more money is made available under the revenue support grant settlement for areas such as mine, where unemployment is already at double national average levels? Will he ensure that more money is made available in January by that means to alleviate some of the problems of that degree of unemployment?

The Prime Minister: The consequence of economic management next year will be lower inflation and renewed growth. My right hon. Friend will make a revenue support grant statement in due course.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order after the statement.

European Council (Rome)

3.32 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the European Council in Rome on 13 and 14 December, which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary. The Council's conclusions have been placed in the Library of the House.

After the Council itself, I attended a formal joint opening session of the intergovernmental conferences on political union and on economic and monetary union. That was followed by a short working session of each conference, attended respectively by my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Those meetings were mainly formal and procedural. The conference will start in earnest in January.

Five main subjects were dealt with by the European Council, the first being political union. On that, the Council reached agreement on a long list of items which are to be considered—and that is the operative word—at the intergovernmental conference on political union. The list includes Britain's proposals for closer co-operation on foreign and security policy, better implementation of Community decisions, a role for national Parliaments in the affairs of the Community, better financial accountability and observance of the principle of subsidiarity. Other countries have also added items to the list. Some of them we welcome; others, frankly, are less palatable.

The key, so far as Britain is concerned, is that the issues have simply been put on the table for discussion. None are agreed. All are for consideration. The conclusions of the Council do not constrain or prejudge the intergovernmental conference's decisions, which have to be reached by unanimity. One of our principal objectives in Rome was thus satisfactorily achieved.

The second main item was assistance for the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. The Community's aim is to support the economic reforms which President Gorbachev and the Soviet Government are introducing, and to help the Soviet Union make proper use of its own resources. We therefore agreed to make available technical assistance to particular sectors of the Soviet economy, and notably to food distribution. We also endorsed the aim of energy co-operation, in which Britain is particularly well placed to play a part.

To meet the Soviet Union's short-term needs, the Community will provide substantial food aid. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I stressed that there should be guarantees that the food actually reaches those for whom it is intended, and does not undermine attempts to make Soviet agriculture more responsive to the market. Those points are reflected in the Council's conclusions.

The Council also recognised the particular difficulties being experienced by eastern European countries as they make the transition to democracy and a market economy, while coping simultaneously with sharp increases in oil prices and the change to hard-currency trading. The Community will contribute, along with other western countries and the international financial institutions, to meeting their financial requirements. It will also provide emergency aid to Bulgaria and Romania, in the form of food and medicines.

Thirdly, the Council discussed the general agreement on tariffs and trade negotiations. It called on all parties to show the necessary political will to reach a satisfactory agreement, and asked the Commission, as the Community's negotiator, to be in touch with other participants, in order to resolve remaining problems. That refers to agriculture in particular.

We thus achieved another of our main objectives—to ensure that Heads of Government dealt fully with the difficulties in the GATT negotiations and gave a strong signal of the Community's resolve to see a successful outcome. I hope other countries will show themselves no less willing to make progress.

Fourthly, the Council dealt with the situation in the Gulf, and agreed an admirably firm statement. That shows the Community as firmly committed as ever to ensuring Iraq's complete withdrawal from Kuwait and the restoration of the legitimate Government. The statement makes particular reference to Security Council resolution 678, which envisages the possible use of force if attempts to resolve matters peacefully have not succeeded by 15 January. The Council's discussions made it clear that the Twelve do not accept any linkage whatsoever between Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and progress on other middle eastern issues. Saddam Hussein must not gain from his agression.

Lastly, the Council welcomed the changes which President de Klerk has, with Mr. Mandela, brought about in South Africa. It also decided to lift with immediate effect the voluntary ban on new investment in South Africa. That is a step which Britain has been urging for many months. I know the decision will be most welcome to Conservative Members. The Community is committed to lift other restrictive measures as soon as the South African Government take certain additional steps, which they have already promised to do. I underline the importance of that move by the Community, which will encourage further reform and political progress in South Africa. I hope that Europe's example will rapidly be followed by others.

For the sake of completeness, I should make two further points. First, the European Council reaffirmed its determination to complete the single market on time. Secondly, the Council did not discuss economic and monetary union on this occasion. But my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced that we shall very shortly table draft treaty amendments to give effect to Britain's proposals for a hard ecu and a European monetary fund.

The Council was marked by a positive and co-operative spirit—despite some subsequent remarks—and by a willingness on the part of all member states to work for solutions which will enable us to go forward as Twelve. There is no doubt that there will be difficult discussions ahead in both the intergovernmental conferences: it would be foolish to deny that, for it is self-evidently true. But the Government's aim will be to work for agreements which are acceptable to this House, and match both Britain's interests and those of Europe as a whole. We made a good start to that end in Rome.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement. I welcome in particular the summit decisions to provide food aid for the Soviet Union and to take initiatives in creating more effective long-term economic and political relations between the European

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

Community and the Soviet Union, and to build new and closer relations with the recently freed countries of eastern and central Europe.

We further welcome the Council's declaration of continued further commitment to full implementation of all United Nations Security Council resolutions to secure the withdrawal of Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait.

There is widespread concern about the failure of the GATT round, so can the Prime Minister tell the House whether he felt that the summit discussions that he has just reported were substantial, and whether he thinks that they will lead to any significant reforms of the common agricultural policy?

The change in the tone of the Government's approach that was evident at the summit is welcome. Will the Prime Minister tell the House what changes of substance there have been in the Government's position? Does the Prime Minister continue in his opposition to the extension of majority voting to those decisions where it would help to improve social policy and to raise environmental standards? The summit communiqué, which the Prime Minister accepted, includes a commitment to press ahead with, and to speed up, the social charter action programme. Does the Prime Minister now support that charter, or will he continue the Government's outright opposition to it?

Does the Prime Minister consider that his proposals for the hard ecu are the quicker route to a single currency, as was said by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury; or a possible route, as the right hon. Gentleman himself said; or an alternative to currency union, as was said by the Chancellor of the Exchequer? In view of the fact that the Government have completed draft treaty amendments on economic and monetary union, will the Prime Minister make them available to the House before they are tabled at the intergovernmental conference?

Will the Prime Minister confirm that he withdrew all the reservations expressed by the Government at the last Rome summit in October, but that he also expressed the view at the latest summit that he intends to make no radical modifications to the Government's existing policy towards the European Community? Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman kindly tell the House exactly where he does stand? Or is he waiting to see how long he can sit on the fence, with pleasantry in place of policy?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his words about the agreements reached on food aid for the Soviet Union and for eastern Europe, and for his robust support of the Security Council resolutions on Kuwait.

I confirm that there were substantial talks on GATT between the Heads of Government, and that some considerable time was spent on them. There was a general acceptance of the importance of reaching agreement, and a willingness to do so. Our negotiators have clear instructions to use all the negotiating remit they have to reach an agreement—although there is expectation that that will require movement by others, as well as by the European Community.

The common agricultural policy is not directly related to the GATT discussions, but there was some discussion about the way in which it is working at present, and some private thought that we may need to review it and to consider what changes need to be made.

So far as the substance of policy is concerned—the right hon. Gentleman mentioned qualified majority voting in particular—we are not persuaded that a case has been made for qualified majority voting. Clearly, we will have to examine what comes before us, but I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that, at the moment, we are not persuaded that a case has yet been made.

On the social charter, what we have said—and what I acknowledged in the discussions that we have had—is that there is a social dimension to the European Community, not least in terms of employment, but that the provisions in the social charter are not generally provisions that we believe to be correct. Our present position on the social charter is as it was some months ago.

On economic and monetary union, the hard ecu remains—as it always has been—a possible route to economic and monetary union. That depends on it being driven by the market and on the choices of Governments, companies and individuals. As to speed, that of course depends on the individual choices exercised—if exercised—by those Governments, companies and individuals. But it is a potential and secure route without many of the risks that we think are attached to the alternatives before us.

I undertake to lay before the House the draft changes that we propose for economic and monetary union at the same time as we present them to our colleagues in Europe. When they are ready, we shall do that.

On our present and future position, we will resolutely support what we perceive to be the British interest in the Community, but we shall do that in the context of trying to build collectively with our partners a better Europe for all of us.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a busy day ahead of us, including a ten-minute Bill and opposed private business at 7 pm. I will allow questions on this important matter to continue until 4.30 pm. The number of hon. Members I am able to call will depend on the brevity of their questions.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend on his positive contribution to the discussions, but did he really get the impression that the Twelve are now back on track and are planning for the future of all democratic Europe? Was any real progress made in co-ordinating policies designed to bring the newly emancipated and long-oppressed countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary into genuine partnership with the rest of us?

The Prime Minister: There was discussion about that, and we hope that the preliminary steps towards the widening of Europe—the association agreements presently being examined—will come forward for agreement at an early date.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I congratulate the Prime Minister on his performance in Rome and I welcome his decision to ditch all his predecessor's rhetoric and prejudice against Europe. But surely he realises that soft words will not hide the necessity for hard decisions yet to come. The difference that now isolates the Government from every other country in the EC is the difference between "could" and "will". He says that we could have a

single currency; they say that we will have a single currency. Surely we cannot allow Britain to be isolated from Europe on that matter. Does he not agree that it is time that Conservative Back Benchers began to realise that the change of style on Europe over the weekend will inevitably and logically lead to a change of substance on Europe in the months to come?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with what the right hon. Gentleman said about there being hard decisions to come; I made the same point a few moments ago.

It is no longer the case that it is only the United Kingdom that has considerable reservations about the plan for economic and monetary union which is before the Community. Alternative plans are being brought forward by a number of other Community countries, and quite a few robust and worthwhile criticisms were made of plans which were previously unchallenged. The United Kingdom has for a long time set out its reservations about what has become known as the Delors plan, drafted by that committee, and they relate to matters concerning this House and to the economic circumstances under which any move to a single currency would be satisfactory. Those underlying economic circumstances are an unchanging reality which we shall continually bear in mind before any moves are made.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): My right hon. Friend has entered into the debate about the best form of European Community for the future with great skill and he deserves to be warmly congratulated. Does he agree, on political union, that it is not a matter of going slower or faster towards the so-called goal of a collectivist, centralist, federal European union, but of ensuring that we instead move towards a Europe which is based on proper constitutional principles of a looser confederal kind, and that that is the kind of Europe that will win many friends throughout the Community? Does my right hon. Friend accept that he has made an excellent start in winning some of those friends for a Europe of the future which meets the democratic principles in which we believe?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I can confirm without equivocation that we remain opposed to federalism in the context of a federal European Government. Our concept of political union is clear: it is one of ever closer co-operation and working together between the member states of the Community while preserving their national parliaments, Governments and traditions. It is not a centralised European super-state.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): In the light of this vast and unappetising menu of proposals for political union and for economic and monetary union, is it not clear that what is being discussed at the intergovernmental conference is every bit as important as the treaty of accession to the treaty of Rome 17 years ago? That being so, will the Prime Minister arrange for the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary to report on each ministerial meeting of the relevant IGC that they attend? When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was Prime Minister, his Minister for Europe reported to the House so that it had an opportunity to contribute to the discussions as they unfolded.

The Prime Minister: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that they are important discussions. We shall certainly report matters of substance to the House.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Would my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of all parts of the House on achieving a notable change of style as well as of future substance in the negotiations, thereby showing that we are psychologically committed, as are the other 11, without reducing our negotiating strength in future complicated discussions? It is normal that there will be objections from all sides to various elements of the plan. Will he say more about plans to bring the European Parliament into more contact with national parliaments, working together for an integrated future and a united Europe?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's earlier remarks. In our discussions with our European partners, we have made it perfectly clear that, just as to some extent the European Parliament has had a direct interest in legislation in this House, so we should not overlook the importance of what this House does to the European Parliament. We have identified particular areas over which it would be appropriate for the European Parliament to have extra powers. They are not extra legislative powers but extra powers of control over the Commission and over financial accountability within the Community.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Will my right hon. Friend accept that the Government's changed style on Europe is welcome but that the question remains: how far has the substance changed? Are the Government now committed in principle to a single currency and a European bank?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows the position perfectly well, for we set it out clearly last June, when I first introduced our proposals for a parallel currency that could develop into a European currency. We need to see to what extent it is accepted and to what extent it works over a period. There is no point in committing ourselves to a principle until we have some experience of whether it is worth while and will work.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Acknowledging the important contribution that my right hon. Friend made to the atmosphere at the Rome summit which contributed to the fact that we ask questions now rather than making decisions on the presidency's conclusions, does he agree that it is wrong to go ahead with the proposals for a central bank, which would pull the consent from under the feet of the British electorate and which would be economic defeatism of the first order and ensure that the people of this country no longer had control over the economic and social priorities that they have chosen in general elections?

The Prime Minister: As I said a few moments ago, we did not discuss economic and monetary union over the weekend, but the matters to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention are the substance of the intergovernmental conference that will deal with them.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The statement mentioned food aid to Russia. Surely it is not really food aid that Russia needs but a method of distributing it once it is inside Russia. What steps can the right hon. Gentleman and the Community take to ensure that such distribution takes place?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right that it is a question not only of food aid but of ensuring that any food aid that reaches Russia is properly distributed to the people who are in need in the Soviet Union. We propose to meet that by using some of the resources that will be available under the technical assistance sums that we granted over the weekend. We are determined to ensure, as far as we can, that the food reaches the people who are in need and for whom it is intended.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that even those among us who believe that further pooling of sovereignty will be in this country's long-term interests none the less welcome his step-by-step approach, and warmly applaud his success in finding allies among the EC Governments for the attainment of British objectives?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In many of the complex matters that will come before the Community in the next few years, the views of different member states will be complex and will often overlap with ours. I certainly believe that, wherever we can, we should build up our alliances to achieve the result that is right for this country and for Europe.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Although I welcome emergency aid to the Soviet Union and to eastern Europe, will the Prime Minister bear in mind the fact that 20 million people are facing starvation in Africa, and that that emergency aid should not be allowed to divert attention from the catastrophes affecting the developing world or to divert funds, which they are giving in inadequate amounts to such countries?

The Prime Minister: I quite agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said, especially about the difficulties in the horn of Africa. It is likely that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will make a statement about that before long.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, two or three weeks ago, there was an assize in Rome, attended by individuals from national parliaments, and from the European Parliament, and that that body reached conclusions which represented the opinions of no one, but those individuals? As that body has decided to make representations to the IGC, will he treat the representations for what they really are—phoney, flawed and fallacious?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his clear clue to how we should deal with any representations that come from that quarter.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Prime Minister recall that, when the Single European Act was presented to the House—with all its far-reaching implications, its defects and surprises—it was adopted by his party? Therefore, would it not be wise for the proposals contained in the Rome communiqué and their implications for the United Kingdom to be fully investigated by the House, with all the means at its disposal? Would not a failure to do so from now onwards constitute a democratic deficit in the area of Westminster?

The Prime Minister: The House has had a number of opportunities to debate these matters. As to whether there will be more, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. As the hon. Gentleman will know, because of his experience in these matters, at the time of the Single European Act there was a large menu of possibilities for it, many of which were unsatisfactory to us, and which were gradually whittled down in the negotiations on the Act. Precisely the same may occur this time.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): My right hon. Friend will know that the original proposals in the social charter have, under the influence of the Government and others, changed enormously since they were first tabled. Does my right hon. Friend believe that our partners will eventually come round to the British view that over-regulation of hours and conditions of working are the wrong way to go, and that we should be opening up the labour market?

The Prime Minister: I certainly share the view that my hon. Friend has just expressed. As I said earlier, there has been no question of a change of course in terms of our views on the social charter. I shall continue to represent that view in Europe.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under Lyne): Is it not clear that one of the most important aspects of these discussions should have been the completion of the GATT round? That is a problem here and now, unlike economic and political union, which is for some time in the far distant future. Is it not also clear that Jacques Delors, when he talked about the crisis within Community countries, was clearly missing the point—that the crisis concerns the role of the President of the Commission himself?

The Prime Minister: We certainly do need to complete the GATT round, but that clearly could not have been done at the European Council, because the negotiating partners were not there. What was agreed absolutely at the Council was the existence of two clear, unmistakable signals: first, that the European Community wanted a successful outcome to the GATT round, and, secondly, that its negotiators—Mr. Andriessen and Mr. MacSharry—were to go back and discuss the content of the GATT round with others, with the intention of reaching a satisfactory conclusion. That was felt strongly by all the Heads of Government who were present.

Sir Michael Marshall (Arundel): May I return to the question of food and, I trust, other emergency aid from west to east? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the military forces of both west and east possess spare capacity in regard to transportation, medical supplies and the whole infrastructure of communications? Will he use his good offices to harness that side of our resources, as well as civil resources, to ensure that aid goes to those who really need it—as he said earlier that it should?

The Prime Minister: That last point is clearly criticial, as my hon. Friend has pointed out. We are at present examining both the priorities and the channels for the disbursement of food, and have asked the Commission to engage in a similar process. Whether that will extend beyond the civil authorities is currently unclear, but I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Prime Minister make clear the position relating to food aid and other support for the Soviet Union? Is it distinctly

dependent on the personal position of President Gorbachev, or will aid be given irrespective of personal positions in the Soviet Union?

The Prime Minister: The issues have not been particularly tied, although everyone will acknowledge that President Gorbachev has made remarkable changes in the Soviet Union over recent years. Given the difficulties he faces, and the difficulties experienced by so many in finding food in the Soviet Union, we felt that it was right for us to help, and I think that that view was universal.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the fact that the weekend brought emotional reactions from both Jacques Delors and Woodrow Wyatt suggests that his tactics during the Rome summit must have been right? Does he agree that those tactics—which included stressing what we have in common with our European partners, rather than stressing our differences—have been confirmed as likely to build a better future in the Community? In particular, has he noted that the French are moving in his direction, in that they wish to reform the various institutions of the Community but to retain the present institutional balance? Is that not a welcome development?

The Prime Minister: I agree that it is welcome. Part of the business of building the sort of Europe that we wish to see is ensuring that its institutions are both effective and efficient, and there is still a considerable amount of work to be done in that regard.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Will the Prime Minister explain what he meant by
"observance of the principle of subsidiarity"?
Will he give us some concrete examples of the allocation of key governmental functions between national Parliaments and Community institutions? Who does he think should make the decisions on allocation?

The Prime Minister: The principle of subsidiarity is clear: things should not be done at Community level which can be better done at national level.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): In Rome, did my right hon. Friend take the opportunity of explaining to the other 11 members of the European Council that the common agricultural policy cost the average British family £16 a week last year, and is likely to cost them £20 a week this year?

The Prime Minister: The detail of the common agricultural policy was not central to our agenda. There was some discussion in private, however—not in the European Council—and I think that there is a general recognition in the Community that the CAP will bear further investigation.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): When he considers the establishment of a single currency, will the Prime Minister bear in mind the fact that the exchange rate mechanism is the embryonic first stage of such a currency, and that within weeks it has done grave damage to the country? The domestic economy is crying out for a cut in interest rates, but, because the uncompetitive nature of the British economy means that the pound is now bumping along in the lower band of the ERM, such a cut cannot be made. The Chancellor is saying that his overriding priority is to maintain an untenable exchange rate. Would a single currency lock us into that unsatisfactory position in perpetuity?

The Prime Minister: The exchange rate mechanism is not necessarily the first step to a single currency, as the hon. Gentleman is perfectly well aware. I reiterate what I said a little earlier—that the purpose of Government economic policy is to bring down the rate of inflation, not to replace inflation today with inflation tomorrow by a premature and unwise movement on interest rates.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Bearing in mind the heavy price that the Soviet Union is paying for holding down food prices to 1945 levels, will my right hon. Friend totally reject the advice that he has just received from the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) who constantly undermines British agriculture and Europe in general?

The Prime Minister: I hear with some interest what my hon. Friend says. This is a matter that might best be settled privately in the back room.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): When the Prime Minister spoke of sending our negotiators back to the table at the GATT negotiations with a view to making progress, surely he cannot intend that we weaken even further our attitude towards this country's clothing and textile industry, which is already suffering from the fact that the European Community is supposed to deal with matters relating to dumping, but never gets round to doing so? The textile industry has already conceded enormous benefit to developing countries and is in a state of crisis at the moment. Surely nothing can be done on that side of the negotiations to enable further progress to be made.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the area that primarily restricted progress in the GATT talks was not the area to which he has referred; it was agriculture. A negotiating remit was available to the Commission. We have agreed that it should be fully utilised and we think that, within that, it will be possible to find an agreeable settlement with our other partners in the GATT round.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend take the President of the European Commission quietly to one side and explain to him that the British people do not react well to threats and that, if he wants to ensure our co-operation and our £6 million a day contribution towards the funds of the European Community, he had better control his irritation at the fact that my right hon. Friend is making friends and influencing people?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend, and I am sure that his comments will be noted throughout Europe. Our principal concern in all the negotiations is to ensure that, at their conclusion, there is a sensible agreement that is satisfactory and right for this country.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Can the Prime Minister confirm that, in the context of political union, there is to be a debate on defence matters? How will that leave our position in NATO? Will he confirm that NATO is the bulwark of our European defence policy? How will

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

that debate affect our special relationship with the United States, and where will it leave the Western European Union?

The Prime Minister: There was a very satisfactory discussion on that in NATO yesterday, but there was general agreement among all the European partners about the absolute primacy and importance of the NATO Alliance. It is worth considering how the Western European Union can itself be built up as a European bulwark of the NATO Alliance.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Will my right hon. Friend accept the many congratulations that he has received this afternoon on a remarkable triumph of personal diplomacy in Rome? His talents in that area will be a great national asset in the months and years to come. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the anti-inflationary teeth of the hard ecu proposal represent the best possible mechanism for achieving convergence of the Community economies on a low inflation rate, which is an aim that all of us in the Community must surely have in common, with the possible exception of the British Labour party?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely correct, especially on the last point. The hard ecu proposal that we have produced would be the most anti-inflationary currency that Europe has ever seen.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): On the question of food surpluses from the EEC, has the Prime Minister had the opportunity to look at last night's edition of the *Glasgow Evening Times,* which reported that hundreds of people queued outside an unemployment centre to get free mince, stew and butter? One unemployed man was heard to comment, "My youngest is 17 months, and this comes in handy for Christmas." If the EEC is going to distribute food, surely it should do so in a more dignified manner.

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure that people in Moscow and elsewhere, who have no food and empty shops, would entirely agree.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, for many people, the breakdown of the GATT negotiations was far more important than the discussions on a single currency? Does he further accept that, without fundamental reform of the common agricultural policy, there is a risk of mounting recession and trade war?

The Prime Minister: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend on the importance of the GATT talks. I share his view that we must reconsider how the common agricultural policy works. It is not the most efficient way to help farming, although in areas of this country and elsewhere help on social and other grounds will be necessary.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): In those discussions on reform of the common agricultural policy, will the Prime Minister and the Government agree with proposals reportedly being considered by the European Commission that the CAP should be phased out and replaced with a policy based on environmental protection and direct income aid for small farmers?

The Prime Minister: No such proposals on reform of the common agricultural policy have been made. The Commission has said that it is committed to bringing forward proposals and measures to accompany the Community offer in the GATT talks. Those proposals may be less radical than has been suggested in some newspaper reports that I have seen, but the key to reform of the common agricultural policy, as my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) made clear a moment or so ago, remains a successful conclusion of the GATT round, and we are working to achieve that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As one of the few specific matters of agreement on this proposal relates to the approximation of the VAT system and excise duties to complete the internal market, and as the agreement particularly said that proceedings have to be completed in the near future, will my right hon. Friend say when the House of Commons and the people of Britain will be told what is involved, because there was unanimous agreement that those proceedings would be completed in the near future?

The Prime Minister: In no sense have we agreed to approximation of VAT rates. We have expressed long-standing opposition to that on a variety of grounds, as my hon. Friend knows. Nothing that was said or done in the European Council this weekend has changed that.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The Prime Minister referred to the unanimous decision to support the use of force in the Gulf. Apart from Britain and France, how many of the other 10 member states have ground forces stationed in the Gulf? Are those countries supporting the United Kingdom and France in a war in which they are not prepared to take part?

The Prime Minister: The ground forces, as the hon. Gentleman says, are predominantly British, which are substantial, as well as French forces. Several of our Community partners have naval and, in some cases, air representation there as well.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Does my right hon. Friend agree with Mr. Delors that the United Kingdom, which has expressed reservations about EMU at the highest possible level, has a better right than some other countries to propose a counter-draft? Does he believe that his proposal of the hard ecu is steadily gaining ground?

The Prime Minister: We certainly shall propose a counter-draft, which is in the course of preparation, and I hope that we shall be able to make it available in early January if work continues as satisfactorily as at present. We have a perfect right to put it forward, and I am pleased that others are seeking to do the same; it will add to the success of the debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Prime Minister aware that some of the oldest nation states in the world are in western Europe and that they have signed hundreds of treaties between them in the past 10 centuries, most of which finished up in the dustbin? With the Rome treaty, which is based on the free movement of capital and labour and which has so many contradictions, we are reaching the point where decisions will have to be made. Is he aware that the British people do not want a single currency or a central bank dominated by the Germans? If he takes note

of what the British people are saying, he will refuse the accolades of Conservative Members to go further down that Common Market road. One thing is certain: political union will not mean that somebody with a name like Herr von Baron Straushauser will stand for Labour in Bolsover. That will be the end of that.

The Prime Minister: Party politics aside, I have no doubt that somebody by the name of Skinner will represent Bolsover at least until the general election. There may well be contradictions in the free market, but there is chaos in the sort of managed market that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends would wish upon us.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend accept that his achievement in persuading our partners in Rome that we want to be participants and not merely observers is significant? Is it not one of the consequences that many of the smaller EC countries that would privately have agreed with a number of our positions will now be more public in making that clear? Does that not mean that the candidate for isolation will be not the United Kingdom but the President of the Commission? Those centralist, socialist ideas have the whole-hearted support only of the British Labour party.

The Prime Minister: It is certainly true that we want a liberal, open-market economy, and that is what we propose to work for. The closer we get to the difficult decisions which need to be taken on economic and monetary union, the more the difficulties of a centralised, prescriptive approach become apparent and the more the attractions of a pragmatic step-by-step approach, with experience gained on the way before making the final decisions, can clearly be seen.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): As the Prime Minister has described his approach in the EC as considered and thoughtful, why was caution abandoned in respect of sanctions against South Africa? Why did the EC specifically rebuff Nelson Mandela's request that sanctions should continue for a while, at least until President de Klerk delivers on his promises? Has the Prime Minister no conception of the perils and dangers for the peace process in South Africa? Is he aware that constantly saying that he is rewarding de Klerk makes the process much more difficult? If that country falls into chaos, the right hon. Gentleman and his Government will have a heavy responsibility to bear.

The Prime Minister: I could not disagree more. Discussions on this matter have been going on for 10 months or so. The hon. Gentleman referred to President de Klerk delivering his policies. I remind him that Mr. Mandela has been released, political parties have been unbanned, agreement with the African National Congress to phase the release of other political prisoners and the return of exiles has been achieved, abolition of the state of emergency has been achieved, the Separate Amenities Act has been repealed, the moratorium on executions and reform of the death penalty have been achieved and a series of further promises has been sought. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to put such a block on future events that we cannot move forward? That would be the outcome of following his policy.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): My right hon. Friend will be aware of the enthusiasm for the idea that the level playing field, which the European Community is supposed to establish, should work. I very much welcomed his statement that sanctions were being considered against countries that did not honour their pledges. Would he like to spell out a little more his hopes and proposals in that sphere?

The Prime Minister: We shall certainly lay down some detailed proposals at the IGC. First, we intend that there should be much closer accountability of countries so that we can check, through the Commission, on how many European pieces of legislation they are enforcing. Secondly, we are concentrating on having a fining procedure for those countries that repeatedly accept legislation but blatantly do not implement it.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Would not the candid answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) be that 10 nations of the Community will have no truck with committing land forces? What was said in Rome about the proposed meeting with Tariq Aziz? Why do we oppose it? If the Prime Minister is going to visit the forces—I should welcome that—should he not also call in on the Yemen to hear what its people have to say and Jordan to hear what they have to say and perhaps discuss with Felipe Gonzales and others the possibility, given the horrendous human and ecological consequences of using the military option, of swallowing his pride and paying a visit to Baghdad?

The Prime Minister: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, I do not believe that that would be helpful. The Community leaders, without exception, were perfectly clear in setting out in the clearest possible terms their condemnation and abhorrence of Iraqi actions. Again without exception, they demanded Iraq's complete, immediate and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait by 15 January. They are perfectly well aware that, if there is to be peace, it is in the hands of Saddam Hussein. It is for him to withdraw. It is he who blatantly and without any just cause invaded an adjacent country and occupied it, and has steadily been dismantling it day by day. The international community should not, could not, and will not stand by and see that happen.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): The Baltic republics of the Soviet Union were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. Does my right hon. Friend agree that a particular status should be afforded to those four republics in technical and food aid?

The Prime Minister: That matter was not discussed during the Rome summit over the past couple of days. We were primarily concerned to ensure that a substantial amount of food aid was available at the centre and that there should be proper distribution to the many people who seem to be unable to obtain food at the moment.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): When the Prime Minister said, in referring to the Soviet policy on agriculture, that the advice had been given that the Soviet Union should be

"more responsive to the market",

are we to assume that the Community will offer the same advice to its member states?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may be certain that that is so.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): In respect of the question of substance over monetary union, may I remind my right hon. Friend what the then Prime Minister said on 30 October in her initial statement which, we understood, was approved by the Cabinet? Did she not say:

"And I again emphasised that we would not be prepared to have a single currency imposed upon us, nor to surrender the use of the pound sterling as our currency"?—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1990; Vol. 178, c. 870.]

Can my right hon. Friend now give a clear undertaking that he will never recommend a single currency to the House?

The Prime Minister: What we have made perfectly clear, as my hon. Friend knows, is that we will examine the proposition, lay a draft treaty to the proposition of a parallel European currency and leave it, as I would have thought that my hon. Friend would have been the first to appreciate, to the market, to individuals, to companies and to Governments to decide whether to use that currency.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his outstanding contribution to the success of the conference, and I welcome the decisions made on eastern and central Europe. Was my right hon. Friend able to express, on behalf of the people of this country, our concerns about the reality of democracy in some countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania? Was it also possible to make contingency arrangements for the situation that may be developing in Albania, where Europe may and should be asked to come to the Albanians' aid?

The Prime Minister: No, that last point was not discussed at Rome over the weekend. Clearly, the earlier concerns that my hon. Friend mentioned were there, but the principal matter under discussion over the weekend on Bulgaria and on Romania was the clear need for food and medical help there. We have, of course, arranged for that to the extent of 100 million ecu, but we have also emphasised the desirability of meeting that expenditure from existing financial resources.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Did the Italian Prime Minister explain to my right hon. Friend why he believes that progress towards a European super-state is irreversible? If so, how did my right hon. Friend respond?

The Prime Minister: He did not, so the question on this occasion did not arise.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his robust defence of the principle that, wherever possible, decisions should be made in national parliaments rather than in Brussels? Does he agree that the principle of subsidiarity needs further defending by being incorporated in amendments to the treaties and that any dispute on that should not be referred to an undemocratic and unelected court but should be determined by a meeting of national parliaments, as has been proposed by several European Governments and by Mr. Alain Poher of the French Senate?

The Prime Minister: I can confirm that, provided that we can get a satisfactory and agreed definition of subsidiarity, we will wish to see it incorporated in the treaty.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his achievement in Rome in changing the summit so that, instead of it being 11 to one it was 12 to one and Britain was not the one.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that we can find the United Kingdom in a position in which it takes a positive role in the development of the European Community. Of course, there will be occasions on which we hold the minority view but, provided that we are satisfied that that view is correct, we shall continue to pursue it.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Does the Prime Minister agree that, if his discussions with Chancellor Kohl about closer links between the British Conservative party and the CDU are successful, the effect on Europe could be dramatic? The unification of the non-socialist majority of the European Parliament could mean that more sense came out of that Parliament and that more control was exercised by it over the arrogance of the President of the Commission.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. No sensible person would want a socialist Europe.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his ecumenical and subtle Euro-diplomacy already seems to be producing some interesting results? Has he seen today's press reports suggesting that the Dutch and French Governments are now moving away from their alleged commitment to the Delors plan for EMU? Could that be the start of a new scenario: "Fog in Channel—Delors Isolated"?

The Prime Minister: I am not entirely sure of the weather, but it is true that some of our European partners, having examined in detail the earlier plans for European monetary union, have now begun to see some of the considerable defects in them that we observed at an earlier stage. I hope that that trend will continue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: May I ask the two Opposition Members now standing whether they were present for the beginning of the statement?

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Not throughout.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The Prime Minister referred to the GATT negotiators not totally fulfilling their remit in the collapse of the GATT talks. Will he tell the House what flexibility there is within the previous remit issued to the European GATT negotiators and whether that remit needed to be and was extended at the recent meeting of Heads of Government?

The Prime Minister: The remit was not extended in the meeting of Heads of Government. The broad remit was a 30 per cent. reduction in the level of 1986 subsidies. That was not fully utilised. Indeed, nobody was asking for a bigger reduction in the GATT talks. They were asking for a redistribution within the 30 per cent., and that is a matter upon which the negotiators have room to move.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Given that the majority of American troops are now being removed from Europe to the Gulf, perhaps never to return, and that the peoples of the Soviet Union and north America now look to Europe on a force for peace, security and assistance throughout the world, will my right hon. Friend and his Government give favourable consideration to the Italian proposals for a common initiative on defence, possibly including a common defence force?

The Prime Minister: I am not immediately attracted to that posture. Our main defence posture has, for a long time, been successfully within the NATO alliance, and I believe that it is in the clear interests of this country for that to remain the position in the future.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, following the highly successful conference in Rome, it is vital that all members of the European Community continue to apply strict economic sanctions to Iraq until Saddam Hussein gets out of Kuwait and pays for all the damage that he has done and the human suffering that he has caused?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The degree of unity on that issue across Europe, and, I am glad to say, within the House, is of immense importance in that respect.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Prime Minister reflect upon the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) on South Africa? Does he understand that the fundamental reason why Nelson Mandela was put in gaol over a quarter of a century ago was that he was denied the basic democratic right to vote in the country of his birth because of the colour of his skin? Until progress is made on that fundamental issue, is it not unacceptable that there should be any concessions to the present South African Government?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will know from the list that I read out some time ago, there have been considerable movements within South Africa, which we welcome. Now the modest move has been taken of lifting the investment ban throughout the European Community. As further moves proceed in South Africa, we shall be able to make further moves towards lifting sanctions. I am sure that that is the best way to achieve the outcome that we all wish to see—a truly open and democratic society in South Africa, which moves back into the community of nations. There is no disagreement between the hon. Gentleman and me over the objective. We believe that the tactics that we are pursuing and the tactics of the European Community agreed to at the weekend are the right way to ensure that progress continues. That is surely in the interests of all South Africans.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend and his team are to be congratulated on their performance in Rome and on the outcome. Were his colleagues in Rome made aware of the strength of feeling in the United Kingdom that Poland, the country over which we went to war in 1939 and on behalf of which we made such enormous sacrifices, should become as early as possible a member of a free, democratic nation-state Community of the type that he and Conservative Members would like to see emerge? Did his colleagues in Rome understand that we in this House do not take kindly to bureaucrats, whoever they are, issuing threats?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's last point will have been noted elsewhere.

I believe that I am correct in saying that Poland already has associated membership of the Community. In due course, when it is appropriate and when Poland is in an economic position to enter, we shall be pleased to see that country join the Community.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will bear in mind the six hon. Members who have not been called and ensure that I give them priority the next time that the Prime Minister answers questions.

Points of Order

4.31 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): On a point of order which refers to Question Time, Mr. Speaker. Are we entitled to ask a general policy question which does not affect an individual? Are we entitled to ask whether a change of policy on the award of hereditary baronetcies has taken place?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical question but if the right hon. Member will submit a question, the Table Office will certainly consider it with care. However, I draw the attention of hon. Members to "Erskine May" page 288, which says:

"It has been ruled that the Prime Minister cannot be interrogated as to the advice that he may have given to the sovereign with regard to the grant of honours, or the ecclesiastical patronage of the Crown or the appointment and dismissal of Privy Councillors or the dissolution of Parliament."

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a separate point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible for the Vote Office to make copies of the helpful report of the proceedings of the European Council available to all hon. Members so that we are aware of the official conclusions of conferences, which are published in Brussels and are made available from time to time? I have a copy here. Would it not be helpful and avoid doubt about what was agreed if copies were made available through the Vote Office? Will you look into that?

Mr. Speaker: That is a matter for Ministers, but I shall look into it.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I should just like to say one happy thing. May I wish the right hon. Member a very happy 70th birthday? Will that be a substitute for other points of order?

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): On that happy note, may I take this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year? I am sorry to return to the point of order previously raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) about Question Time, but I do so having read "Erskine May" in the interim. I ask for your guidance. Having read "Erskine May" on titles, it is my understanding that it would be legitimate to ask the Prime Minister a general question on how his expressed philosophy in one area may conflict with his actions in general in another area—the creation of hereditary titles or peerages. As we have both now read "Erskine May", would you agree with such a ruling?

Mr. Speaker: A general question to the Prime Minister is one thing, but the question asked at Prime Minister's Question Time was not a general but a specific question. That is why I ruled it out of order.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): May I support the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor)? It is most important that the conclusions of these conferences are made available to the House. They go to the very root of the powers of the House, and it is important that we know what the Commission's conclusions are, so that we can question them at the earliest possible moment. This affects you, Mr. Speaker, as much as everyone else.

Mr. Speaker: I am well aware of that, and I certainly agree with the proposition. The matter is for those on the Front Bench. The Prime Minister is sitting there, and I am sure that he has heard what has been said.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Further to the point of order of my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), Mr. Speaker. On 9 June last year, I introduced a ten-minute Bill to abolish the granting of honours for political purposes to stop the practice whereby, after 20 years' service and with full pay packets, Tory Members automatically receive a knighthood. I was deeply critical of the way in which the Prime Minister of the day was using the honours system. In giving advice to the Queen——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me? The hon. Gentleman's ten-minute rule Bill fell.

Mr. Grocott: No, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: Well, it did not get on to the statute book and fell when Parliament was prorogued. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Grocott: As I understand your ruling, Mr. Speaker, it is out of order for us in any way to criticise the advice that a Prime Minister gives to the monarch about granting honours. I was deeply critical when I proposed the introduction of my Bill. What is more, the House gave me leave to introduce it. I was supported by many hon. Members throughout the House. Although honours may technically be awarded by the Queen, we all know that advice is given by the Prime Minister. Just as it is in order to criticise Cabinet Ministers who may technically——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a debate. Will the hon. Gentleman come to the point at once, please? We have a busy day ahead of us.

Mr. Grocott: It is simple, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, you said that it was out of order to criticise the Prime Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I told the hon. Gentleman, and the whole House heard it, that it was out of order for the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) to ask a specific question about a specific honour. If the hon. Gentleman wants to introduce another ten-minute rule Bill, I suggest that he does so.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I say rapidly that the presidency conclusions are in the Library of the House of Commons and are available to hon. Members? I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said about the need to ensure that every hon. Member knows about them in good time.

Mr. Speaker: I agree.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance. I recall that, in your earlier statement about the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) to the

Prime Minister, you said in effect that we were not allowed to bring the royal family into controversy. Did you mean the house of Windsor, the house of Thatcher, or both?

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows that we stand by our own arguments, and do not call in aid members of the royal family. There is a distinction between general matters raised with the Prime Minister or matters raised generally in debate, and the rules for Question Time. I repeat page 288 of "Erskine May":

"It has been ruled that the Prime Minister cannot be interrogated as to the advice that he may have given to the sovereign with regard to the grant of honours".

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On this point, Mr. Speaker. We are all sorry to risk your wrath, particularly at this festive time, but as I understand it, there are five honours which the sovereign can give without advice from the Government. They are the Knights of the Garter, the Knights of the Thistle, the Order of Merit—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may be true, but it has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: With respect, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Well, what has it to do with me?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: If I may forget Christmas charity, Mr. Speaker, if you will not listen to the point, how can you rule? I make the point that the sovereign awards certain awards, including the Royal Victorian Order, without advice from Ministers. Is this House to say that "Erskine May" is set in stone and will not move on with the times in which we live?

Your ruling, Mr. Speaker, was surely to the effect that all other honours are given on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of the day. Hon. Members should be able to question a Prime Minister, whoever he or she may be, about the honours that are given, except for those that are purely within the royal prerogative. If we cannot do that, "Erskine May" is not a document for us to use but bears down on the liberties of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Remembering that we have a busy day ahead, perhaps I might say to the hon. Member and others who are concerned about the matter that I must put into practice the rules as they are. If the House wants the rules changed, that can be done as a result of a suggestion being made to the Procedurer Committee. I am sure that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark), of all people, would not wish me to change the rules according to my instincts or prerogative.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you recall that, when you were in the House in another capacity and when Harold Wilson was giving honours out here, there and everywhere, criticism was expressed by hon. Members on both sides at a time when certain people were due to be nominated on lavender notepaper, and afterwards when another list was submitted to the Queen?

This is a matter of freedom of speech. The present Prime Minister has declared that he is in favour of a classless society. That must mean the abolition of the honours list. But having declared that, the right hon. Gentleman gives Dennis Thatcher an honour that will be collected by Mr. Thatcher's son when he has passed on. There must be something wrong if we cannot talk about that.

Mr. Speaker: Put it to the Procedure Committee.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a completely different point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that yesterday, at a meeting of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, an attempt was made by a majority of Members on 20 occasions to raise the question of an interest rate cut and, if necessary, a devaluation of the pound. I understand that all the requests——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I trust that the hon. Member is not seeking to raise on the Floor of the House what went on in a Select Committee. He knows the rules. That cannot be done until the Select Committee has reported.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps I might put it to you in another way, Mr. Speaker. Is it proper for the Chairman of a Select Committee on 20 separate occasions to rule out a request for a Division?

Mr. Speaker: What is not proper is for the hon. Member to raise on the Floor of the House what went on in a Select Committee until that Select Committee has reported.

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): On a completely different point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you to clarify whether it is within the ambit of the House that the rules of sub judice can be interpreted so generally that I can be refused by the Table Office permission to table early-day motions or written questions relating to the Government Actuary's Department and the responsibility of the Treasury, which knew as far back as 1986 about the problems at Levitts?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady must submit her questions to the Table Office. If they are refused, she may wish to see me about them, and I shall certainly look at them.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a happy point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the hon. Member's birthday, too?

Mr. Ewing: A short while ago, you congratulated an hon. Member on the Opposition Benches on his 70th birthday. You merely looked, when doing that, in the general direction of the Bench on which I am seated. Also seated on this Bench are a number of my hon. Friends who, I am sure, are wondering, as I am, to whom you were referring. Would you care to make it clear that you were referring to my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)?

Mr. Speaker: I was referring to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees). But I would say to any right hon. or hon. Member in the House who has a birthday today: happy birthday.

BILL PRESENTED

Export and Investment Guarantees

Mr. Secretary Lilley, supported by Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mrs. Lynda Chalker and Mr. Tim Sainsbury, presented a Bill to make new provision as to the functions exercisable

by the Secretary of State through the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and make provision as to the delegation of any such functions and the transfer of property, rights and liabilities attributable to the exercise of any such functions: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 50.]

Licensing Reform Bill

4.44 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Valley): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Licensing Act 1964 to make new provision with respect to licensing justices and to the grounds upon which applications for liquor licences may be refused; to require a statement of reasons for any refusal; to set a time limit on the consideration of applications; and for connected purposes.

I admit at the outset that the title of my Bill is more ambitious than the content of the measure, but it is a sensible, limited measure which is sponsored by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I hope that it will be given a Second reading.

There is little doubt that the licensing system in Britain needs reform. The Small Independent Brewers Association tells me that the public house structure comes from the Beer House Act 1830. The Government recognised the need for liberalisation in 1988 as a result of the deliberations of the Erroll committee. Indeed, the Birmingham licensing bench, the biggest in the country, said in 1988:

"The time has come for Parliament to instigate a detailed study of the licensing laws with a view to their wholesale reform."

In July of this year, the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who is responsible for these matters, said that the Government recognised that there was a good case for the wholesale reform and updating of the liquor licensing system.

My Bill is more modest that that. It argues for changes to be made in the licensing system which would make it more objective, fair and transparent and more responsive to the needs of the community and the consumer. I emphasise that I have no intention of making relaxations in the existing licensing system. Indeed, I welcome Government measures against irresponsible drinking. In particular, I welcomed their decision in 1988 to give justices more powers to revoke licences with only 26 days' notice and to make the prosecution of under-age drinkers much easier. Even so, the existing system can be restrictive and oppressive in a number of ways.

My remarks may be taken in a geographical, or be thought to have a west midlands, perspective, in that I was a member of the licensing planning committee there for two years some years ago. *The Birmingham Post* has been conducting a vigorous campaign against what CAMRA —the Campaign for Real Ale—has called

"the notoriously restrictive Birmingham licensing bench."

Even the editor of *The Licensing Review* has written:

"there is great concern about certain of the policies undertaken by Birmingham and the difficulty in challenging them."

The measures in my Bill will be applicable to and will benefit England and Wales generally. Basically, the Bill contains four measures. The first is to give every applicant who has a licence application rejected the right to know the reasons for the rejection. It seems wrong that, when someone has made what might have been an expensive application and who may have tied up much capital in doing so, he should have no right to be given reasons if his application is rejected. The Home Office says that many benches are prepared to advise applicants of the reasons for rejection, but that is only advice, and my magistrates bench in north Worcestershire tells me:

"It is not usual, or a requirement, that justices should give explanations or reasons for their decisions."

That must be wrong. They should be required to do so, as is the case in Scotland.

The second measure would put a time limit on the length of time a person can chair licensing magistrates. I suggest that there is a balance to be struck between experience and a fresh eye and objectivity. Some cities, such as Cardiff and Manchester, have fixed terms. Others do not; for example, in Birmingham, one gentleman was chairman of the licensing magistrates for 22 years. That is not to comment on his integrity, but I suggest that there is a case for limiting the term to five years only.

The third measure would set in motion a maximum period for the consideration of applications that are properly made. Before 1988, that was more difficult, because the transfer sessions met only a few times. There is no such limit now, and although most licensing benches comply with reasonable limits on time, there is a minority which, irrespective of the agreement of the police and the fire and planning authorities, use their powers unnecessarily to delay applications.

For example, in Birmingham recently, there was a £2·2 million scheme for which it took 15 months to obtain even a decision from the licensing magistrates, despite the fact that planning permission had been given by the Labour-controlled council. Eventually, the applicants withdrew in disgust.

The most important measure is to remove from licensing magistrates the criterion of the need to justify a refusal. The criterion of economic need gives rise to inconsistencies and arbitrary decisions, and tends to stifle competition, create local monopolies and reduce consumers' choice without meaningfully protecting the public. Under the Licensing Act 1964, Justices in England and Wales have a wide remit as long as they act, in Lord Widgery's words, "honestly, fairly and conscientiously". It is increasingly recognised that refusals on the ground of need have undesirable consequences.

First, the decisions become prone to inconsistency and become more arbitrary. It is wrong that licensing magistrates, who may not have done market research or put down the capital that applicants did when they entered their applications, should try to second-guess the market, despite the fact that the application would pass on planning grounds, in terms of police objections, the licensee's responsibility and fire objections. It is wrong if, despite those grounds, the application is turned down because it is said that there is no public need for the premises. In its pamphlet "Licensing Law in the 80's", the Justices' Clerks Society said:

"The licensing system, as a result, is often unfair, and expensive to applicants."

Secondly, economic need stifles competition. It is no coincidence that the Justices' Clerks Society said that most objections to licences come from the larger brewers which like to protect their own competitive position. It is no wonder that they control 57 per cent. of off-licences in the United Kingdom. The Small Independent Brewers Association wrote to me recently in support of my measure, saying:

"Our members wish to compete on equal terms with companies who contrive to stifle competition by offering heavy discounts or low-interest loans when trading out of a protected market which our members cannot penetrate."

CAMRA, which also supports my measure, said:

"CAMRA is convinced that the licensing system acts as a barrier to entry and can reinforce local monopolies in the ownership of pubs."

Obviously, those local monopolies are not in the interest of the consumer or our constituents. The Government have recognised that. Lord Young recognised two years ago that the licensing system should not fortify local monopolies, but the Government have yet to act. I hope that my measure will be a further prod to get them moving in that direction.

The criterion of economic need reduces consumer choice. Surely it is wrong that my constituents can satisfy the licensing magistrates, the local planning committee, the police and fire authorities of the need for an off-licence and have it turned down. It is wrong that the Birmingham licensing magistrates should turn down a £750,000 application which has the support of the Labour-controlled city council, the police, fire and tourist authorities and the architects, and say that they refuse it because

"existing facilities in the area are adequate for the requirements of the public."

That is paternalistic and arrogant and denies consumers choice and variety. Therefore, the ground of economic need should be removed from the criteria available to licensing magistrates when considering such decisions.

The measure is modest and sensible. It has support from both sides of the House, and I hope that it will receive a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. Denis Howell, Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Mr. Robin Corbett, Mr. Roger King, Mr. David Gilroy Bevan, Mr. John Bowis and Mr. Simon Burns.

Mr. Anthony Coombs accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Licensing Act 1964 to make new provision with respect to licensing justices and to the grounds upon which applications for liquor licences may be refused; to require a statement of reasons for any refusal; to set a time limit on the consideration of applications; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 18 January and to be printed. [Bill 51.]

Orders of the Day

Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

[Relevant documents: Ninth Report from the Defence Committee, of Session 1989-90, on the Progress of the Trident Programme (HC 237), and the Government's Reply thereto contained in the Committee's Seventh Special Report (HC 661).]

4.53 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Alan Clark): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House will recall that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made a statement in the House on 5 December 1989 in which he outlined the Government's proposals for the future organisation of the atomic weapons establishment. Those proposals arise from a full review carried out in 1989, which took into account the points raised by the Select Committee in its fifth report on the Trident programme in 1988-89.

The report of the Select Committee on Defence made a number of points about contractorisation, which the Government have largely accepted. The Committee has not recommended against contractorisation, but said that it should not be rushed. We agree with that and do not plan to move from the present interim arrangements before late 1992.

My right hon. Friend announced that, as an interim step, a management contractor would be appointed. An invitation to tender for the contract was issued to eight major defence companies on 6 April and three bids were subsequently received from British Aerospace, led by Royal Ordnance; Hunting-BRAE; and a joint bid from Rolls-Royce and Babcock International. After examination of the tenders, the Hunting-BRAE bid was selected as the one that offered the best prospects of improved management and efficiency, together with value for money and safe operation of the establishment.

Hunting-BRAE has appointed a new chief executive and 19 other managers from the three companies that make up Hunting-BRAE. The staff of the establishment will retain their civil service status for the duration of the contract and the new managers are seconded as civil servants.

The groundwork is now being prepared for the reorganisation of the establishment's management structure. The contract provides for task forces to carry out studies in three spheres: to look at productivity, pay and conditions; cover management information systems; and deal with long-term manufacturing strategy.

A consultative document, setting out details for the contractorisation proposals was issued to the atomic weapons establishment trade unions on 5 December to coincide with my right hon. Friend's statement. The trade unions commented on that document and my Department issued a second consultative document on 27 July responding to their comments. The trade unions have proposed that, instead of being operated by a contractor, the establishment should become a "next steps" executive agency or a defence support agency.

"Next steps" agency arrangements or defence support agencies have considerable attractions for those establishments or organisations that should appropriately remain in the civil service. But where it is appropriate and feasible to introduce full contractorisation, that option is preferred.

Contractorisation will address the establishment's difficulties in two ways. First, the contractor will have the greatest possible freedom to offer the terms and conditions needed to attract and retain the work force he requires. Contractorisation will enable the establishment to gain the additional project and production management expertise on the scale required, together with access to the corporate support of a major industrial company or consortium. Those benefits cannot be obtained to the same extent from alternative arrangements.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Clark: I always give way, even to the hon. Gentleman, to whom I gave way five times last time I was at the Dispatch Box. In the end, we came to an understanding that I could no longer give way. As I judge the mood of the House, it is that we should debate the subject back and forth across the Floor in the short time remaining to us. Although I shall now, as I always do, give way to the hon. Gentleman, I do not propose to give way very generously.

Mr. Dalyell: Given the experience of the Committee stage of the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill 1990, are we guaranteed that the views of the trade unions will be listened to more seriously than happened in respect of the Property Services Agency and the Crown Suppliers? On that occasion, relationships became unnecessarily difficult and even bitter. Is there good will in discussions with the trade unions? May we have that assurance from the Minister?

Mr. Clark: No, the hon. Gentleman may not. I do not doubt that the Committee stage of this Bill will be extremely constructive and fruitful, and that it will possibly be a prolonged experience. However, the only views to which I and my hon. Friend propose to listen are those of right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): That is shocking. We will deal with the Minister upstairs in Committee.

Mr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well the arrangements, understandings and conventions of the House. It is for individual right hon. and hon. Members, who are elected to this place, to articulate the views of their constituents, and of their sponsors, in the case of Labour Members. I cannot give an undertaking that the Committee will specifically listen to the views of trade unionists. It will listen to members of the Committee and to other right hon. and hon. Members. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) knows that perfectly well.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question was whether Ministers would listen to the views of trade unionists—although not necessarily only in Committee. I asked my question in good faith, and I am appalled by the Minister's answer.

Mr. Clark: In every other field, such a combination of functions in one entity would be undertaken in industry

and not in government. The fact that the business is nuclear means that safeguards are required, but not that the personnel must be civil servants.

My Department remains committed to consultation with the trade unions on all detailed aspects of contractorisation. Further consultative documents will be produced in due course dealing with specific issues such as pensions. We are always ready to meet the trade unions to discuss any specific issues that may be of concern to their members. I repeat that for the benefit of any Labour Member who was not listening. That is a totally different matter from representations made in Committee upstairs, as the hon. Member for Ashfield well knows.

My Department will not compromise on safety. The establishment has an excellent safety record. The current safety organisation at the establishment will remain in existence after vesting day, and the highest standards will continue to apply. The Health and Safety Executive will continue to be heavily involved in safety issues at the establishment under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, as it does now.

As to the provisions of the Bill, clause 1 enables the Secretary of State to designate activities and premises at AWE. The provisions in the rest of the Bill will apply when arrangements are made for those designated activities to be carried out under contract by a company.

Clause 2 ensures that the transfer of AWE activities —and with them its staff—to the contractor will be governed by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981—TUPE 81—which protect the interests of staff by preserving conditions of service at the time of transfer. TUPE 81 does not preserve pension arrangements, although it does make it clear that there should not be a detrimental change in working conditions, including pensions, as a result of the transfer. My Department will therefore introduce a new, private sector pension scheme at AWE, which will mirror the provisions of the principal civil service pension scheme and UKAEA principal non-industrial superannuation scheme as closely as possible. The new scheme will provide benefits that are at least as good as under existing schemes.

A new redundancy payments scheme will also be set up that will, when taken together with pension scheme benefits, provide redundancy payments of an equivalent value to those payable under the PCSPS. I must stress, however, that we do not expect redundancies among AWE's work force as a result of the introduction of contractor operation.

Clause 2 also ensures that the establishment's staff will not be treated as having been made redundant when they cease to be civil servants and become employees of the contractor, with the same jobs and the same conditions of service.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): Including pensions?

Mr. Clark: I have just mentioned those.

In practice, AWE staff will be transferred not directly to the contractor but to a company formed by the Secretary of State to act as the employer of all establishment staff. That employing company will then be acquired by the company that wins the competition for the full contractor operation of AWE.

Clause 3, together with the schedule, preserves AWE's current position with respect to certain items of legislation. After vesting day, establishment land, facilities and other assets will remain the property of the Crown, but will be operated by the contractor. It will be necessary for certain privileges related to Crown status to remain in force, for security and, in some cases, for practical reasons.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Minister say something about the interface between the AWE under contractorisation and the warhead operation at Coalport and Faslane? I understand that that operation is currently totally interfaced by the MOD, but that under contractorisation, there will be a cut-off. What will be the interface between private enterprise contractorisation and the AWE in relation to the MOD's warheads operation at Coalport and Faslane?

Mr. Clark: I recognise the importance of that aspect, but it is tangential to the measure now before the House, so it is not one on which I shall comment now. However, if the hon. Gentleman catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps he can expand on that point later, when my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement would certainly respond. Also, I have no doubt that the Committee will consider that matter as one of prime importance during its deliberations Upstairs.

In cases where there is room for legal doubt whether a necessary Crown privilege would continue to apply after contractorisation, provision has been made in the schedule to ensure that it will. That does not necessarily mean that, in each case, the privilege would be lost if no provision were made. The intention is to put the issue beyond doubt. We will continue to examine AWE's position in relation to the Acts mentioned in the schedule before and during Committee stage.

The main reason for the provisions that have been made in the schedule is security. It is essential that access to classified nuclear weapon information, and to the highly sensitive AWE sites themselves, is restricted to specially cleared personnel. The majority of the provisions in the schedule are intended to prevent local authorities and other non-Crown bodies from acquiring rights of access to establishment sites and to nuclear weapon information.

There are also practical reasons involved. For instance, so that my Department will have the flexibility to change the contractor in the future, it will be necessary to prevent a contractor from acquiring security of tenure at establishment sites. Accordingly, there is provision for AWE to be exempt from the section of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 that deals with security of tenure for business tenants.

Clause 3 also gives the Secretary of State power to repeal or amend any of the provisions of the schedule. Clause 4 ensures that the Ministry of Defence police will continue to fulfil its existing roles with respect to the establishment. They include not only its vital guarding role at the sites, but also criminal investigation. My Department will continue to be responsible for setting security standards, and for the vetting of AWE staff, who will have to meet the same stringent security requirements that apply now.

Clause 5 provides for certain expenses that might arise in connection with the employing company to be paid for out of money provided by the House.

As well as creating a framework within which contractor operation can be introduced, the Bill provides safeguards both for the United Kingdom's defence

[Mr. Clark]

interests, by helping to protect national security considerations, and for AWE staff, by ensuring that they will keep their existing jobs without detriment to their conditions of service when the contractor is introduced. Those, together with other rigorous safeguards that will be imposed through the provisions of the contract, and by the close and continuous scrutiny of the establishment by my Department through the compliance office, will ensure that the considerable benefits of contractor operation will be achieved without detriment to safety, security, or the establishment's world-class reputation as a research establishment. I commend the Bill to this House.

5.9 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): When the Secretary of State announced his intention to introduce the Bill 12 months ago, many of us expressed grave reservations about it. Like most people who follow the work of the atomic weapons establishment, I was aware of the difficulties facing it. Last year, I had the opportunity to visit Aldermaston and Burghfield and I spoke to people at both plants.

There is little disagreement that the problem was pay. The same conclusion was reached by the National Audit Office in 1987, when it said:

"The MOD identified the basic problem as being uncompetitive Civil Service pay."

The Select Committee on Defence noted that, at Aldermaston and Burghfield, pay for skilled workers is £148 while in the rest of the travel-to-work area the average wage is of the order of £209. That has resulted in the problem of staff shortages in the AWE doubling from 268 in March 1988 to 552 in March this year.

As I understand it, the Bill's purpose is to address the challenge to management arising not only from staff shortages but, since there is to be an increase in the scale of manufacturing, from the weakness in production manufacturing. It also seeks to address the problem of the undue distraction of research scientists from their research work.

Those aspects merely serve to reinforce my original point about the problems of pay and staff shortages in an area where one has to concede that the economy is overheated. If the AWE were to be relocated, the first choice would not be the Thames valley. I am not sure that many other communities would be prepared to have it, but I recognise that some of the past concerns about safety have been unfounded, because its record has been good. Whether that would be the case in future is open to question.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Ministry of Defence has done nothing about pay. It must be given credit for its attempts to introduce special pay arrangements. However, they have often created more problems than they have resolved. For example, when pay rises were given to one group in span 8, people in the allegedly higher group 7 found that they were being paid less and asked to be downgraded. Because of the narrowness of the Treasury instruction, money was made available only to a particular section of work force at any one time and a comprehensive review of pay and conditions was never possible. In a number of instances, the Treasury created problems by intervening. There is no one here to defend the Treasury, but it defends itself well enough by other means.

There are cases within the United Kingdom public sector where unions have been able to negotiate new and more flexible arrangements as, for example, in the case of the highly successful deal for the railway inspectorate, as outlined in the evidence to the Select Committee.

The resolution of such difficulties need not require the kind of Bill that is being proposed today. The model of the Defence Research Agency could be taken. Staff could be brought in from outside the civil service, new management structures could be adopted, more flexible pay scales created and the current reallocation of work between the various establishments could continue.

The present AWE structure is being retained and the various plants are not being split up, as happened with the contractorisation of the dockyards. How the management structures will operate may be debated in Committee. I remember sitting through the Committee proceedings of the Dockyard Services Bill 1986 and being told that the attraction was stand-alone management in each place. I realise that the functions are different and I shall return to that point. Even without the contractorised arrangement, there could be subcontracting between sites and that would assist greatly.

But the basic point that the Government do not appreciate is that the contractorisation of the AWE requires a privatisation of the labour force. It will be taken out of the civil service and become the asset of the employing company. The workers will cease to be civil servants and will not be guaranteed many of the employment rights that they presently enjoy. The Minister said that a number of things would be just about the same, that he hopes that things will be all right, but that no guarantees can be given.

Mr. Alan Clark: I do not anticipate any redundancies.

Mr. O'Neill: We shall wait and see about that. The experiences of other contractorisations have been mixed. Where new management teams have come in with the purpose of, as much as anything else, finding new work, they have been reasonably successful. But if the labour shortages are to be overcome, more people will have to be employed in the short term, with the higher wages needed to attract them, being funded, I imagine, by the higher productivity in the early stages, and that in turn will result in redundancies in the future.

I wrote that passage before the Minister spoke and I read it in its entirety because I recognise that the Minister said that no redundancies are anticipated. But will he confirm that no redundancies will be anticipated throughout the five years of the contract?

Mr. Alan Clark: I stand exactly by my words. No redundancies are anticipated. One of the advantages that will accrue from the Bill is a greater flexibility in terms and conditions and pay which will allow more effective recruitment. No one can predict what will happen in five years' time. It would be irresponsible to do so.

Mr. O'Neill: That is fine. We have now got it. At least at the beginning of the five-year period no redundancies are anticipated, but towards the end they are a possibility.

Mr. Alan Clark: No, not at all.

Mr. O'Neill: The Minister will give no undertakings, and that is what I said earlier. That is the kind of problem we have had. I recognise that people do not have jobs for life, but under the system that the Minister envisages, money will be made available by the contractors, as is often the case in such contracts, in the early stages when there is no profit, and only as the five-year period goes on will profits begin to accrue.

The situation is viewed over the five years. In this instance, we shall see additional recruitment and an enhancement of conditions, and we shall then have to get increased productivity. Thereafter, as I said earlier and as the Minister has now conceded, it cannot be guaranteed that there will be no redundancies towards the end of the five-year period. That is the only way in which I can see this measure washing its face financially. We will doubtless come back to that in Committee.

Individuals may well be surplus to requirements or not suited to the new set-up, and the difficulty about removing them from the civil service is that they will no longer have access to the other career openings that the civil service offers. They would have to leave the AWE and apply afresh to the civil service, which is a complicated business and which need not be imposed on the work force in the way that I have described.

I am concerned that the Minister has glided over the honouring of existing agreements. He has said that conditions and the private pension scheme will be better. We shall have to look at that again to see what guarantees in writing can be given to the work force that that will be so. If it proves correct, I shall be happy to concede the point on Third Reading; but, as we say in Scotland, I hae me doots.

In Committee we shall examine the issues surrounding the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981—TUPE 81—but that is a detailed matter and we do not have time to go into it now.

The British experience of Government-owned, contractor-operated—GOCO—facilities is limited. Neither Rosyth nor Devonport has a great record on job security. In Devonport the work force has fallen from 14,000 to 5,000. The role of the contractors has been to shed labour. There have been attendant problems in Devonport, as the Minister knows, because of the nature of the site, the rent for which is felt to be excessive, and reductions in the core programme and the difficulties of finding alternative work. In different circumstances, Rosyth has probably done better; it has improved industrial relations and has a good record of winning additional work, but there are still problems with the size of the core programme and with MOD business generally.

The jury is still out on British GOCOs. That is certainly not so in the United States where the problem has been one of safety. There have been faults due to cost-cutting and carelessness. I know that the record of the AWE is generally good, not least since the recommendations of the Pochen report were implemented. We have not had problems on the scale of those in the United States, where GOCOs will require between £66 billion and £100 billion to be spent on them in the next 25 years. The name Rocky Flats has become synonymous with environmental disaster. The House, the communities around the establishments and the whole country will require much more convincing than we had from the Minister this evening about the duties of the compliance officers.

Mr. Alan Clark: Chernobyl was not a GOCO.

Mr. O'Neill: It was not; it was operating under different circumstances. But it is legitimate to compare and contrast the United States and Britain, no matter how unpleasant the Minister may find such comparisons.

The Opposition believe that the role of the compliance officer is somewhat dubious—not in the sense that we are hostile to him, because we wish him well, but there are other agencies and other ways of looking at the problem. We shall also look at this in detail in Committee. We are not convinced that nuclear safety and profitability are always compatible. We do not envisage that the financial arrangements will be generous enough to ensure that contractors can meet all their responsibilities and still find money at the end to make a sizeable profit.

The Labour party recognises that AWEs will exist for a long time to come. We want them to be reorganised along the lines of the Defence Research Agency. We are committed to continuing with the Trident programme, and we recognise that AWE will have to accommodate future nuclear disarmament, the dismantling of warheads, and the creation of new inspection and verification procedures. These establishments are unique and are responsible as much for the preparation for peace as for the preparation for war. Understandably, they work in conditions of secrecy.

The trust that the workers, people who live locally and the nation place in these establishments rests on the knowledge that the director and staff are answerable to the Secretary of State and this House. Labour believes that that clear line of accountability is paramount. We believe that there is a way of resolving the management and production problems of the establishment, and that can be achieved——

Mr. Douglas: Given the hon. Gentleman's responsibilities, it would be helpful if he would clarify the position of a future Labour Government. Would they be in a position to cancel the contract or to renegotiate it and bring everything back into the public domain?

Mr. O'Neill: We shall have to wait and see what happens. We are in the run-up to a general election, and I believe that this contract will never see the light of day. We shall win the general election, and the contract will not proceed. Vesting day is towards the end of this Parliament, and it is likely that the Government will have been defeated by then—not that the hon. Gentleman will have anything other than an academic interest in the House by that stage.

The Opposition believe that establishing an agency capable of working out new pay deals free from Treasury interference and capable of securing higher productivity through having a full complement of staff and keeping that staff in the civil service, can meet the obligations of the House to the people who work in the industry. We can assure the people who live around it that their environment, health and safety will be maintained, and we believe that the security of the nation can be retained. All that can be secured by voting against this unnecessary Bill.

5.25 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): My goodness me: until the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) spoilt it all by saying that the Opposition would vote against this sensible measure, I was struck by how far

[Mr. Michael Mates]

the Labour party has come—in favour of Trident and sensible nuclear deterrence, for instance. I hope that the hon. Gentleman, who spoke with common sense, will still be alive after all his Back Benchers who did not hear his speech have read what he said.

The ninth report of the Defence Select Committee of last Session and the Government's reply to it are mentioned on the Order Paper as relevant to this debate. It was the latest of our annual examinations of the progress of the Trident programme. We have visited Aldermaston more than once, most recently in March 1989, and this year we took evidence from the trade unions and AWE here in Westminster.

Part V of the latest report deals with the Government's proposals for the contractorisation of AWE. Over the past 10 years, we have had cause repeatedly to express concern about the situation at AWE, and particularly about the implications of manpower shortages there for the Trident programme. This year we reported:

"the manpower difficulties . . . have worsened. Unless the remedial measures proposed prove effective, there is now a significant risk that some elements of the warhead programme may fail to meet their scheduled delivery dates."

It is against this background that the Government have decided to introduce this Bill, and we shall do all we can to give it a fair wind.

Our report mentions a number of potential anxieties about the contractorisation proposals, many of them expressed most strongly in evidence given us by AWE trade unions, which described the reaction of their members to the proposals as one of dismay. Principal among these anxieties is safety. It was good to hear my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement say that that was paramount among his concerns. The Ministry has assured us that AWE's high safety standards will be maintained after contractorisation, but we were a little worried that, in practice, a contractor might be tempted to cut corners.

As we pointed out in paragraph 68 of the report:

"There is clearly some potential contradiction between the notion that new management is required to change the 'culture' of AWE, and the argument that safety standards will be inviolate because the staff of AWE will take with them their existing culture."

Somewhere between the two we must make certain that everyone understands that the old excellent standards must be maintained while the new approach to management, productivity and work changes in accordance with the Government's wishes.

We have also recently produced a report on MOD's record of radiological protection of service and civilian personnel. In our 12th report of last Session, published in November, we had occasion to examine AWE again. We welcomed the recent improvement in recruitment of health physicists to make up for staff shortages in health physics posts in AWE's safety division, and we recommended that a duty to keep health physics staffing up to strength be included in the AWE management contract. I hope that the Minister can assure me that it will be so included.

In general terms, we welcome the recent fall in exposure levels of AWE staff—we go into that in detail in the report, and I shall not repeat it now.

One acid test of whether the contractorisation of AWE is a result of this Bill has improved health and safety environment at AWE will be shown by the extent to which recent trends towards ever lower individual and total exposure levels can be maintained. I am hopeful about that, having seen at first hand the progress made at Rosyth in this respect, and we are told that the commercial operators in the dockyards at Devonport have managed to do the same.

We voiced concern in our report that the compliance office might not have enough staff with the relevant expertise to conduct adequately its monitoring and auditing role. I welcome the assurance in paragraph 14 of the Government's reply that the compliance office will be fully independent and properly resourced. I hope that the Minister will be able to flesh out that assurance with specific facts and figures. In that regard, clause 5 of the Bill is noteworthy, because it gives the Secretary of State funds to meet expenses incurred

"in assuming responsibility for any liabilities".

That seems to suggest that the management contractor at AWE will not himself be liable in respect of nuclear safety. Perhaps my hon. Friend could clarify that position in his winding-up speech.

Similarly paragraph 9 of the schedule gives exemption to the contractor from certain sections of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could explain what is involved and why he thinks that exemption is necessary.

Our report concluded with these words:

"It is essential that the move to contractorisation is not rushed and that the details are very fully worked out before the contract is awarded."

Progress in bringing forward the Bill has been swift, and we can assume that its implementation will be equally swift. The Committee and the House would welcome my hon. Friend's assurance that, in its speed, the Ministry is not neglecting the finer points—the small print—of the contractual terms, because it is upon them that the success of the Government's plans will turn.

I and my colleagues on the Committee welcome the Bill. However, we shall watch for the points that I have raised, and I hope that the Minister will be able to help us by answering some of them.

5.30 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): In spite of, or perhaps because of, the typically exiguous remarks by the Minister, I regret that I retain a deep-seated unease about the principle that lies behind the Bill.

On Second Reading, we are concerned more with principle and rather less with detail. The principle that we ought to bear in mind, above all others, is the legitimate protection of the public interest. We cannot have a debate of this kind without reminding ourselves that nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction, and that the responsibility for their deployment and potential use is probably the most awesome of all ministerial responsibilities.

I am unrepentantly of the view that ministerial responsibility for the development and manufacture of such weapons ought to be retained, to the extent that the atomic weapons establishment should remain in the public domain, and that those who are most directly concerned should remain part of the civil service. I cannot flinch from the conclusion that contractorisation reflects something of a dilution in ministerial responsibility.

If there have been staff shortages and weaknesses in management—the Select Committee on Defence has

certainly identified these, and they seem to have been almost a matter of omission—is it really the case that such defects cannot be cured without contractorisation? I do not believe that the case made to support that proposition this afternoon was of the compelling nature that it ought to be to justify the substantial alteration which the Bill proposes.

I remain of the view that overcoming those defects was, and is, a question of will and resources. If sufficient will and sufficient resource had been made available, there would be no justification for embarking upon the course of action required by the Bill.

Contractorisation, whether on an interim or a full basis, seems to be an acknowledgement of failure, and we should not allow this occasion to pass without drawing that to the attention of the public. It seems inevitable that, while research and development will be matters of contract, safety issues will continue to be controversial. We may find ourselves in a curious situation. If there is a failure to meet the standards of safety set down by the compliance officer, the Government may find that they have to go to the civil court to ensure that the standard of safety specified in the contract is met. Alternatively, if the Government withhold stage payments in the contract, on the grounds that standards of safety are not being met, they may find that they are the subject of civil litigation.

In my submission, it is a curious notion that something as fundamental and important as development of and research into nuclear weapons could be the subject of civil litigation. At a time of international tension, that could hardly inspire confidence in the capacity of the Government of the day, whatever their colour, to deal with the interests of the people.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned the possibility of civil litigation being used to impose health and safety requirements. As I understand it, the whole purpose of the exemptions in the schedule is to put the company outside the bounds of civil litigation. The company will be able to invoke Crown immunity because it will get that from the schedules. The company will be exempt from 13 Acts of Parliament, ranging from the Explosives Act 1875 through to more recent Acts.

Mr. Campbell: There may well be exemptions in the schedule of the kind that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned, but if there is a dispute between the Government and the contractor as to whether or not the contractor is fulfilling his contractual obligations with regard to meeting safety standards, the only way that it can be enforced will be to sue on the contract. That seems to be a curious position in which to find ourselves.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): The compliance office, which will be very strong, will have the right to cancel a contract if safety regulations are not met. The exemptions in the schedule will preserve the situation as it is at present. The establishments are seeking no greater indemnity than they have at the moment.

Mr. Campbell: While I accept the Minister's second point, as it seems to reflect accurately the terms of the Bill, we should still direct our attention to the first. Let us suppose that the compliance officer says, "You have failed to meet the necessary standards of safety. This contract is cancelled." Can one imagine that the contractor will walk quietly away and say, "Tough luck. That was one that didn't quite work out?" When we consider the sums of money involved, it is inevitable that the contractor will seek recourse to law in such circumstances. Therefore, we would find ourselves disputing issues of this nature in the High Court of Justice in the Strand. That is why it seems to me that, in the public interest, this matter should stay firmly and irreconcilably in the public domain.

I think that I am correct in saying that there is no statutory reference to the compliance officer within the terms of the Bill. What will be his authority? What powers will he have? What sanctions will he be able to exercise, other than those provided by the terms of the contract that the contractor enters into?

Let us suppose that there were a breach of safety. If the compliance officer has the right to say, "Meet the necessary standard," but the contractor declines to do so, what will the compliance officer do then? Will he cancel the contract? If we were three years into a five-year contract, at a time of international tension, is it conceivable that the Government would be party to the cancellation of a contract for the research, development and production of weapons which are of such significance—whether one is in favour of them or against? Once the Government were committed to any one contractor it seems to me that the contractor would be in a position of extraordinary strength and influence. The Government would essentially be at the mercy of the contractor.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), who opened the debate on behalf of the Labour party, is no longer in the Chamber. The truth of the matter is that, if contractorisation takes place, no Government, whatever their colour, are likely to reverse it. The decision on the Bill which will be taken by the House will stand for a very long time, because the disruption which would necessarily be caused by moving the atomic weapons research establishment back into the civil service would be so great that no Government could properly contemplate it.

I have no particular allegiance to the trade unions that have been party to the discussions that preceded the Bill; I am bound to say, however, that all the evidence suggests that their responses displayed considerable maturity and responsibility. It is a pity that their proposals for a "next steps" or defence support agency have found so little favour with the Government. Perhaps the Minister will say more about that when he winds up.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan referred to the United States experience. In my view, the United States experience of Government-owned, contractor-operated atomic weapons activities hardly inspires confidence, and the Rocky Flats establishment does not strike me as a model that we should seek to emulate—any more than the standards of management at Chernobyl would have satisfied the civilian nuclear energy industry in this country.

Government-owned, contractor-operated activities may well suit the environment of the United States. We know that that environment allows for much more scrutiny. The armed services committees of both Houses of Congress have far greater powers than the Select Committee on Defence in the House of Commons, and members of those Houses have much more access to information than British Members of Parliament. We have only to consult the index of, for instance, *Jane's Defence Weekly* to see—week in, week out—what contracts have

[Mr. Campbell]

been placed in the United States, and how much is involved. When contracts are placed by our Ministry of Defence, we are not entitled to be given the details.

I have no doubt that ministerial responsibility for nuclear weapons, from their development through every conceivable stage, should be unequivocal and unbending. I fear that, if the element of contract is introduced, Ministers' natural response to any criticisms made in the House will be, "It is not us; it is the contractors." To some extent, the responsibility will be sloughed off. That is not in the interests of the people of the United Kingdom, which is why my hon. Friends and I will vote against Second Reading of the Bill.

5.42 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will forgive me if I do not take up the points that he has just made. This is a short debate, and I know that many of my hon. Friends want to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that the Committee stage will provide an opportunity for hon. Members to explore and challenge his remarks.

I welcome the chance to speak this evening, simply because I have considerable constituency interests. Aldermaston is only a few hundred yards—and Burghfield only a few miles—outside the Basingstoke constituency. Many hundreds of my constituents work at those establishments: during the past 12 months or so I have received many representations about the Government's proposals, and have listened with the greatest care to every point put to me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) is not attending the debate: he is recovering from an operation, and I know that the House will wish him well. I was in touch with him recently, however, and I have discovered that his views coincide with mine to a significant degree. I believe that his constituents, if they read the report of the debate, will wish to know that.

Unlike the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, I have no quarrel with contractorisation in principle—provided that the worst instances of the United States experience can be avoided, and provided that my constituents will not suffer as a result of its implementation. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister for reassurances in regard to points with which we are both familiar from the voluminous correspondence that has passed between us, as well as correspondence from his predecessor.

My first point relates to safety and security. I accept that the two consultative documents provided considerable reassurances. Both stressed the role of the compliance office, which is clearly a debatable matter, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), in his capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, described—and knows far better than I—the further reassurances given in the Committee's ninth report, Session 1989-90, page 29, question 226. Nevertheless, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will demonstrate to my constituents that their fears about safety and security under contractorisation are misplaced.

My second point concerns pensions. I am encouraged by assurances given to me by my hon. Friend the Minister in correspondence—for instance, that

"new pension arrangements . . . will match those of the PCSPS as closely as possible"

and that

"the accrued pension rights in the PCSPS of staff transferred will not be lost".

The ball is in my hon. Friend's court, however: he must give my constituents further assurances that they need not worry on this score.

My third point concerns redundancy. My hon. Friend's predecessor wrote to me on 8 June:

"On the question of redundancy rights, I can give a categorical assurance that the length of service before contractorisation will count fully towards the calculation of redundancy benefit".

I hope that my hon. Friend will stand by that.

I am prepared to accept that contractorisation may be the way forward for the AWE, but I cannot accept it if it fails to safeguard the interests of my constituents. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury would wish me to make that point on his behalf, too.

5.46 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Like the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), I have a constituency interest in the atomic weapons establishment —in my case, a Cardiff interest. The AWE is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones)—who has been seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but several hundred of my constituents work at AWE Llanishen, which the Minister visited only last week. Perhaps he will say a word about his visit when he winds up the debate.

What worries the Opposition is that the Government's approach is based entirely on one of those "quickie" principles: "If it moves, privatise it; if it does not, privatise it until it does." The Government have not devoted sufficient thought to what constitutes the real problems, and what is the most apposite solution—as distinct from the one that comes immediately to mind.

We are also worried about the hypocrisy of a Government who attempt to gain the alleged advantages of private-sector management of production and research facilities on the four sites involved, on grounds of flexibility, while at the same time trying to preserve all the Crown immunities that go with being in the public sector. It cannot be right for the House to be presented with a Bill that puts in private management but retains the part that is most convenient to the Government—the absence of any threat of independent challenge by regulatory authorities in the event of a breach, or alleged breach, of health and safety or environmental legislation by which other private firms must abide.

Let me take another example from the constituency of the hon. Member for Cardiff, North, and even closer to mine; just across the river, in fact. Amersham International also deals with hazardous toxic substances —in this instance, radioactive—and it moved from the public to the private sector. It has to abide by all the health and safety and environmental legislation. It is open to inspection by the National Rivers Authority or the environmental health department of Cardiff city council in respect of some of its emissions, and by the inspectorate of pollution in respect of air emissions.

None of that will apply to the atomic weapons establishment at Llanishen. It will all be dealt with by the compliance officer under a completely untested, cosy in-house arrangement. The compliance officer's duty is not simply to ascertain whether a naughty has happened in the plant, which would be a breach of the environmental and health and safety provisions if it happened in the private sector.

The compliance officer will also have the duty of ascertaining whether the establishment is giving good service in terms of production. He or she will therefore have a jumbled job, trying to judge whether the employees of the organisation are doing a good job and earning their bonuses, whether for production or quality, as well as carrying out all the other functions relating to possible breaches of the environmental and health and safety legislation, if such legislation were to apply—which it will not—to the privatised GOCO, or government-owned, contractor-operated, plant.

Anybody who knows the Cardiff area will be aware of the problem with the location of AWE Llanishen. Although I have never visited or driven past Aldermaston and Burghfield, I believe that they are located in relatively leafy suburbs and that there are no highly built-up residential areas right at their edge. Cardiff is different. The atomic weapons establishment at Llanishen is in the middle of densely populated residential suburbs in a city of 300,000 people. That is probably unique for a nuclear weapons facility in the western world. In addition, AWE Llanishen is surrounded by other work places, such as the tax office. Thousands of people spend every day bang next door to the production facility at Llanishen.

I grew up in that area during the war when almost everybody in Cardiff had a relative working at what was then the Shell factory. Over 20,000 people worked at the royal ordnance factory then. During a war, people put up with a lot in terms of decisions about the location of such sites which they might not tolerate today. I stress that that plant is surrounded by residential areas in a city of 300,000 people.

That is why we are concerned about the reputation of the GOCO facilities in the United States, where the idea has come from. We want to know on the basis of what record the House is being asked to accept that GOCO management is better than the present public sector civil service Ministry of Defence management. Given their record in the United States, GOCOs are causing us considerable concern. The Government have a tendency to follow United States management devices without giving them proper and serious consideration. We are concerned that the Government have not properly thought through whether GOCO, which has a long tradition in the United States, will work satisfactorily in this country. Although it has a long tradition in the United States, it also has a long tradition of causing problems.

The film "Silkwood", which I seem to remember watching on television last Christmas, was a story about something going wrong in a GOCO facility in the Okie country, in the Appalachians, where serious problems arose because Kerr McGee, the GOCO contractor in that case, consistently breached all manner of health and safety and environmental legislation in the push continually to beat nuclear production records so that the organisation could meet its contracts and make good profits on them. Anybody who saw that film and who lives in the Cardiff area is naturally concerned.

I turn now to the attempt to apply GOCO in this country. How many people have expressed a strong interest at the interim stage, which has now been going on for two months? On an interim basis and without the benefit of this primary legislation, we hear that the Government have appointed Hunting-BRAE to act as their interim, semi-contractorised management contractors to run the four establishments. Nobody had previously heard of Hunting-BRAE. That firm was put together ad hoc, being formed out of one division of Hunting Engineering plus Brown and Root from Houston in Texas, plus—oddly enough—another public sector company in the Atomic Energy Authority.

Hunting-BRAE is therefore part public and part private. One might say that it is almost a cross-breed between a hybrid and a mongrel. Nobody had previously heard of Hunting-BRAE; it has no previous record. Although all its existing parent companies might have good records in their own industries—and although they have gained the confidence of Ministers—they are not names on which one could make a judgment about whether they are suitable to be given the contracts, at least for the present two years, and presumably then to win the long-term five to seven-year contract that will be available if the Bill is enacted.

Brown and Root has been famous for being close to the United States Government. When Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson became President and Vice-President of the United States in 1960, an apocryphal conversation is supposed to have taken place when victory was announced, in which President Kennedy—the first Roman Catholic President of the United States—was supposed to have said, "Right, now we can start to build that tunnel from the White House to the Vatican", and Lyndon Johnson is supposed to have replied, "Yes, as long as Brown and Root get the contract."

Although Brown and Root is the flagship of civil and mechanical engineering industry in Texas, we have never heard of Hunting-BRAE. It is not a household name about which one can say, "We know that, if Hunting-BRAE is in charge, everthing will be okay." We cannot say that, because the two associates have never worked together. This is very much a pig in a poke. There is no transparent chain of command from the managing director of Hunting-BRAE, so we cannot say that we know who to go to or whose backside to kick if something goes wrong. We shall be relying on an untried consortium and on the untried compliance officer mechanism if things go wrong. Naturally, that concerns people in Cardiff.

The Cardiff plant does not deal with radioactive substances. By and large, it deals with beryllium, which is a highly toxic substance. The Cardiff plant carries out precision engineering operations to provide high-quality, space-age components for nuclear warheads, rather than being involved in the final assembly or in the plutonium-related facilities in the manufacture of nuclear warheads. The work at the Cardiff plant is absolutely critical.

The city of Cardiff, of which I represent a quarter, wants to know what would happen if there was the sort of corner-cutting about which we have heard in connection with GOCOs in the United States. What would happen if a fire broke out and if a beryllium-enriched toxic cloud wafted over the whole city? You will be aware, Mr. Speaker—if you are not aware, I should make both you and the House aware—that although beryllium is not

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

radioactive, it is one of the most toxic substances on the face of this earth. Its effects are similar to those produced by asbestos and the effects of berylliosis on the lungs are comparable to those of asbestosis. Any increased fire hazard risk, as a result of corner cutting resulting from the pressure on management to earn bonuses, which would come about if the Bill were enacted, must be of enormous concern to any hon. Member who represents part of a city such as Cardiff, which has a nuclear weapons facility right in its centre.

We are anxious to know what the Minister can say about his observation that this primary legislation may assist the Cardiff factory in its ability to win more outside work. That is what he said to the press. We are mystified by the relationship between the Bill and that observation. It is no doubt true—it has been proved true in the past few years—that any plant, such as that at Cardiff which has enormous precision engineering skills, can and should win more outside work. The Cardiff factory made complex autoclave facilities for the national health service when nuclear weapons work was quiet. It carried out work that few other plants could carry out.

It is of much concern that the introduction of specific single-purpose management with one objective—simply to speed up the production rates of nuclear weapons—is unlikely to contribute to diversification from sole dependence on nuclear weapons. The Minister mentioned that earlier, and perhaps he will return to it when he replies to the debate.

I should be glad to hear any explanation of how Crown immunity can be compatible with diversification from nuclear weapons production. If a private sector company that is competing with AWE Llanishen for precision engineering work has to abide by modern health and safety and environmental legislation whereas AWE Llanishen does not, one can imagine the complaints that will be made to the Office of Fair Trading.

I rest on the point that the hypocrisy of the Government must be exposed. They are trying to gain all the supposed advantages of privatisation, but we must bear in mind the disadvantages that we shall suffer as a residential area with this facility sited right in the middle of it.

6 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): I support the Bill, but I have several reservations, about which I hope to receive some reassurance, probably in Committee.

Many of Aldermaston's employees live in my constituency, in the villages of Tadley, Baughurst, Kingsclere and Overton. Indeed, the fence of the AWE forms the boundary of my constituency. I am sure that the House will therefore understand why I have a particular interest in certain parts of the Bill.

We live in dangerous times, with the unhappy prospect that, in the not-too-distant future irresponsible people will be able to have nuclear weapons. It is vital that our nuclear weapons are up to date and are delivered on time to ensure that, in a few years' time, we are not blackmailed. I see the Bill as a major step forward in achieving the production of nuclear weapons on time.

The staff of the atomic weapons establishment are the most loyal and dedicated to be found in any industry in the United Kingdom. Their skills and professionalism are outstanding, but they work against a background of dangerous substances. It is of unique importance that there is trust and commitment, especially to safety. Many of the staff who work at Aldermaston are exasperated by the civil service bureaucracy. Given the factory's unique operation, it is as inappropriate to civil service bureaucracy as one can imagine. I quote from the letter of a constituent who works there, who speaks of

"at every turn having to contend with the rigours of bureaucracy which has increased enormously since transferring from the UKAEA. This is so demoralising for team leaders and project managers with endless paperwork and delays in sometimes getting the simplest of jobs accomplished."

It would not be possible to sum up more neatly or more completely the problem and the exasperation that the Bill will enable the AWE to break away from, thereby offering it substantial benefits.

Wherever there is change, there is always anxiety among the staff and people affected by it. I have some reservations, to which I need to receive answers either now or in Committee. We are told that most of the jobs will be secure. One cannot definitely tell whether there may be some sporadic redundancies. Will the staff be any worse off if they are made redundant than they would have been had the existing employment arrangements continued? Will staff suffer any loss in their prospective pensions? That is of particular relevance to the older members of staff, who already can identify and look forward to a pattern of pension, some indexation and a standard of living in their retirement. Will that be at risk in any way?

In opening, my hon. Friend the Minister referred to a further consultative document on pensions that he will publish. Will it be published before the Committee stage? By that stage, will we know what is in the consultative document and what are the Government's views on it? I draw particular attention to the position of the ex-UKAEA staff, who have had one change in pension arrangements. I want a clear assurance that they will be no worse off as a result of the changes that are being made.

May we have an assurance that staff vetting will be as stringent as it has been in the past, and who will pay for it, which is of some relevance?

The most important of those factors is safety, not only in the plant and for its employees but for the residents of Tadley and Baughurst. The safety of the wider area as well as of those who work in the establishment is of much importance.

We must ensure that no corners are cut on safety. We have been given assurances on that, and I value those assurances. We know about the compliance officer's role, but can we be told more about the powers and the independence that he will have, because that, too, is particularly relevant?

Having expressed those perfectly natural anxieties on behalf of my constituents, I give the Bill a fair wind and will support its Second Reading, but I seek assurances on those matters both now and in Committee.

6.7 pm

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I am glad to have the opportunity of following my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). I listened to his description of the factories that are adjacent to his constituency, which apparently are close to residential areas. In my brief remarks—I appreciate that I must be

brief to ensure that every hon. Member has the opportunity to contribute to the debate—I shall be most concerned with ROF Llanishen. I am guilty of using the old initials; it is taking me some time to catch up with the new ones.

ROF Llanishen has been very much part of our community in Cardiff. It is in a residential area, but it is quite fanciful to describe it as a nuclear weapons facility. It is a high-precision engineering factory, but in no grammatical sense of the phrase could it be described as a nuclear weapons facility.

My comments essentially relate to that factory in my constituency and to those who work in it. High priority should be accorded to those who work in it. These are vital defence factories, the prime resources of which are their employees. Their skills and dedication make the quality of that important work force.

All those who are involved in this matter agree that change is necessary. I understand that the trade unions that represent the work force in the factories agree that change must be brought about, although they do not necessarily agree with the changes embodied in the Bill.

The Bill offers opportunities for better use of those vital defence factories and better employment for the people who work there. I see no reason why anyone employed in the factories should be worse off merely because of the change to contractorisation.

As recently as 2.45 this afternoon, I met three of my constituents who work at ROF Llanishen and who wanted to tell me their fears about the future, despite the assurances that they had been given. They said that the Bill did not adequately cover pensions and redundancies and that there were no guarantees about redundancies, contrary to their present position while they are part of the civil service. They said, in the same mood as those who say that change in the factories is necessary, that the only difference between their view and the Government's proposals was the loss of their civil service status.

I know that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 will be applied and that they will essentially relate to pay and conditions of employment, but significant differences affect pensions and redundancy terms because of the differences between the civil service and the outside world.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement visited ROF Llanishen on 12 December. I know from those who work there that his visit was appreciated by those he met. They put these very points about pensions and redundancy terms and he sought to reassure them. He said that he expected the pensions and redundancy terms to be at least equal to the present provisions. I understand that he promised to consider their concerns further and even to consider whether it was possible or appropriate to change the Bill.

I know that my hon. Friend will give every consideration to the representations that hon. Members and those who work in the factories have made. Any reassurance which he can give the workers must be good and right. If he finds it possible to embody such changes in the Bill, that would be welcomed not only by me but by everyone who works at ROF Llanishen.

Safety is the paramount issue in Cardiff and at the other factories not only for the staff—although, naturally, they are the first to be concerned about it—but for all those who live near them, including my family, which is a neighbour of ROF Llanishen. I have always known that that high-precision engineering factory operates to the highest standards. Independent monitoring has shown that it always operates not only within the safety limits but to practically the highest possible such limits—tests have shown that that factory sticks within 1 per cent. of the maximum permissible limits. Obviously, if possible, we should aim for even higher limits, not a lowering of those limits. Those who work at ROF Llanishen are concerned that contractorisation might lead to a different approach to standards and safety measurements. That must not happen.

My hon. Friend the Minister offered us the reassurance that there will be a compliance officer who will maintain the Ministry of Defence standards which are presently in force. That officer must have all the resources necessary to ensure that he maintains all those standards, so that those who work in the factories and those of us who live outside them are completely reassured that they will continue to operate to the highest standards.

With those important reservations, I give at least a cautious welcome to the Bill.

6.14 pm

Mr. Tony Durant (Reading, West): I am pleased to speak on the Bill. I do so because, like my colleagues, I have constituents who live in my constituency but work at Aldermaston and Burghfield. I also speak on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), who represents the area and who, as many hon. Members know, has had a kidney transplant. I am pleased to report that he is mending satisfactorily. We hope that he will return soon. In fact, I have been doing his work for him, but he is now dealing with his own letters, which is one load off my back. He is taking a great interest in these matters.

Aldermaston and Burghfield are highly rated organisations of a very high standard. They integrate well into the local community and employ a large number of people in the area. All my references to them over the years have been based on their high calibre. However, I support the principle of contractorisation, perhaps because I feel, having heard from Ministers, that there is no alternative.

I was not entirely satisfied by the answers by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to the question why did we not go down the route of having executive agencies. They are part of the Government's proposals in several parts of the civil service. I am still not convinced of the reasons why we did not leave the whole organisation within the civil service. That would have been a better way to proceed, and I should be interested to hear from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary about that matter.

My constituents, like those of other hon. Members, are concerned about safety. Are we sure that the contractors will be conscious of safety? This is a volatile, dangerous activity. The present staff have high technical skills. In Reading, I have looked into the incidence of leukaemia among children who live in the area. Nothing has been proved, although there have been many research projects. The local population are worried about this activity being undertaken by the factories. They are dangerous places, and we must be sensitive to the concerns of local people.

I am also worried about security. After all, plenty of people in the world would like to get hold of some of the secrets of the establishment. It seems that other hon.

[Mr. Tony Durant]

Members were taken all over it, but I was not allowed to go very far. It has been opened up a little, but some of the secrets have rightly been kept. The establishment should be kept as secure as possible. What will happen when the business is run by a contractor rather than those who work there at present?

The staff are worried about the future of their pension scheme, as I know from letters which I have received. In 1987, the trade unions and the management encouraged them to join pension schemes rather than to opt out, and they all did. But they are now worried that, having taken that decision, they will be in difficulties. What is the future of those who were in the UKAEA pension scheme? It is not a very good scheme. One of my constituents, for whom I have been battling for years, transferred from that scheme and has had difficulty in getting his money. I am anxious that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary should clear up the anxieties which have been expressed.

Those staff who joined the principal civil service pension scheme would like some reassurances—rightly so, because their pension is their future, they work at the establishment and they live in the area. Although it is a nice area in which to live, the work position is not as good as it was. They want to keep their jobs rather than be made redundant. I should like the place to continue to be a successful establishment. I am concerned about those matters and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will reassure me.

6.19 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Second Reading of the Bill, which is a welcome and timely measure. As other hon. Members have said, it deals with an important subject. We live in an age in which there has been a proliferation of nuclear weapons and in perhaps as little as 10 years' time, there may be as many as 15 or 20 nuclear powers. It is extremely important that our nuclear deterrent is kept up to date, and Aldermaston and its satellite facilities are central to that.

Five years ago, I had the privilege of working briefly as a project manager for a firm of management consultants on a project at the atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston and I very much enjoyed the experience. I hasten to add that I now have no financial connection with any body or organisation connected with Aldermaston, with any commercial ventures with which it may now be involved or with any other defence contractor. I found it an interesting experience and I was extremely impressed by the calibre of the scientists at Aldermaston while I was studying the possible contractorisation of one facility.

I welcome the proposal to move to a Government-owned, contractor-operated arrangement for three reasons, two of which have already been covered succinctly by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), following my hon. Friend the Minister's remarks. One reason is the need to get away from civil service pay and conditions for specialised, high-grade work in an area in which living costs are exceptionally high. Within the framework of national pay bargaining, it is impossible to deal properly with pay requirements.

The second reason is the need to get away from civil service procedures where possible. Some procedures derive inevitably from the requirement for safety, which has been mentioned so often. Other procedures—I heard a lot about this when I was at Aldermaston—are just sheer bureaucracy, such as the need to have continual meetings, to produce minutes of those meetings and to comment on the minutes. There should be scope to get away from that.

The third reason, which has not been touched on, is also important and the heart of my contribution is concerned with the contractual arrangements. The two facilities in the world that are closest to the scientific side—I stress the word "scientific" because there is a far larger production side at the sites involved—are the Los Alamos facility and the Lawrence Livermore laboratory in America. As my hon. Friend the Minister will know, they are run by the contractor operation of the university of California. That arrangement goes back to the second world war when Los Alamos played its famous role in developing the first atomic bomb. Apart from the appointment of the chief executive, the key part that the university of California plays in its arm's-length relationship with those two facilities is the system of peer review.

Under that system, eminent scientists from the university of California who are not directly involved in the programme periodically sit down with the scientists at the facility, study their work over an extended period and access it. That is very motivating for the scientists concerned. When I was at Aldermaston, it was raised as a complaint that nothing similar happened there. There are nominally a number of Government committees that look at such matters at arm's length. They are sometimes—but not always—manned by people of comparable expertise.

The fact that every scientist once every one or two years has the opportunity to sit eyeball to eyeball with other scientists—and one or two are Nobel prize winners—who will look at their work is a motivating experience. That system also pulls out the occasional rotten apple in the barrel and there are one or two of those even in the best organisations. The scientific side at Aldermaston is extremely good. We must never let the well-publicised problems on the production side detract from the fact that the Aldermaston scientific side has a reputation that is not only world class, but comparable with that of its American counterparts, which have 15 or 20 times as much to spend.

The expression "GOCO" can mean many different things. I visited the successful GOCO shipyard in Sydney, which is the best of the Australian naval dockyards. Sometimes the contractor runs things from top to bottom, as is the case with the Rocky Flats arrangement, the low technology end of the nuclear side in America. Alternatively, there can be a more arm's-length strategic arrangement which the university of California has with the two laboratories that I mentioned.

I firmly believe that for the scientific side at Aldermaston—the minority, but the most important end—it is best to go for the latter arrangement. It is essential that our key scientists there should continue to be Government representatives in the international arena. That is not a quibble about words. In the nuclear business, collaboration—principally with the Americans, but increasingly with the French—is essential. We cannot afford to do everything ourselves. I have it on good authority that it will not be acceptable to those with whom we deal in America or in France to have people arriving at international conferences and being billed as employees of

a contractor, rather than as Government representatives. It will be essential for those people to be covered not only by conditions relating to secrecy—which has already been dealt with adequately—but by conditions on commercially confidential intellectual property rights.

American and, increasingly, British contractors will not be willing to pass information to people who are not in some way tied to Government. It does not matter to whom they belong as employees. The crucial point is that their conditions of service must involve the key areas of secrecy and of intellectual property rights, and when people go to international conferences, they must bear a label saying "Government representative". That is the case with the key scientists at the two American laboratories although, technically, they are employees of the university of California. That is an important point; it is not just a quibble.

The Bill is splendid. For a number of reasons, it is right that we should make a GOCO out of Aldermaston. However, it is important that we get the contractual relationship right at the scientific end of the operation so that those who work in the key scientific posts—who may be doing the more sensitive work and who are oriented towards a scientific environment—maintain and enjoy their present international status through continuing to be recognised as Government representatives at international conferences abroad. They must also continue to be subject to their present constraints on the passing of knowledge. I commend the Bill to the House and I will vote for the Second Reading.

6.27 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): As every hon. Member who has participated this afternoon has said, the Bill is extremely important for many reasons. On Second Reading, we look at those reasons briefly, as we shall go into detail on them in Committee. Many hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, have said that they will support the Bill, but with strong reservations in some areas. I accept that many of them said that because they have substantial constituency interests. It is right that they should look after the workers who live in their constituencies. I only wish that on some occasions they had looked after the interests of workers who live in my constituency. That was not to be and, sadly, this Friday we shall see the end of the last coal mine in the Rhondda valley. It is the end of a great era in British history. But there we are. Self-interest is as good a motive as any in politics. If people come to our side through self-interest, who am I to deny that?

I am sure that Conservative Members will be rushing to fill the Committee and I look forward to their support. I know that the Government Whip is greatly relieved at the possibility of having all these worthy gentlemen sitting on the Committee. He will not have to dragoon anyone. Of course, if they support our amendments, the Government Whip will be in greater trouble. I am looking forward to the Committee and, if necessary, to doing battle with the Under-Secretary of State. His unfailing courtesy will mean that he will listen to our arguments. However, as I have always said, we win the arguments but lose the votes.

The Bill is a response to incompetence. That has been acknowledged and was illustrated by the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), who had the honesty and decency to acknowledge that he was part of the incompetence for a brief period. We will forgive him.

Mr. Brazier: The House understands that the hon. Gentleman has to fill his speech somehow, but he should not throw random barbs around the Chamber. He must have heard me say that Aldermaston has on its scientific side a world-class reputation disproportionate to the amount of money it spends.

Mr. Rogers: Yes. I often wondered what the hon. Gentleman was doing there.

The Bill is a response to the Government's incompetence. They are acknowledging that they cannot run the atomic weapons establishments. It is an open and honest acknowledgment. The enormous criticism of the Government's performance in the past year or so is finalised in the Bill. It is a bolt-hole Bill. They are running away from the problem by saying, "You do it." They are hoping to offload the problem on to a private company. Of course, the private company does not mind because it will receive substantial resources from the Government. It will probably be a substantial contributor to the Conservative party, but there we are. That is called the recirculation of Government money.

The Government will have to face the same problems because they will not go away. The problems of today will be the same next year and the year after. The difficulty is that there will be one stage in between and the Government may have more problems in the future than they have now.

It is strange that in the proposals the problems have now been identified. On the Conservative Benches are all the business men, managers and those such as the hon. Member for Canterbury who visit such establishments. I should have thought that once the problems have been identified and once it has been acknowledged that they are not intractable, one should just apply oneself and resolve them. The Government are not doing that. They are saying, "We are incapable of managing these institutions and running the business, so please do it for us." This is privatisation in a real sense. Talking about contractorisation obfuscates the truth. It is a Government-owned, contractor-operated privatisation.

We shall be looking closely at how the capital assets are to be controlled. I am not sure whether they will be handed over to the company or whether they will be in the form of a lease. It is a little ambiguous in the Bill, but we shall pursue it later. I wonder whether the company knows what a shambles some of the buildings are. Is it aware of the Government's incompetence in relation to construction contracts, particularly the A90 buildings constructed specifically for the Trident warhead?

We are not talking about the privatisation of an engineering company or a consumer commodity such as water or electricity. As hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, this is the privatisation of the means of production of the most fearful weapons known to mankind. I honestly and sincerely believe that it should not be in private hands. Also, it is the privatisation of the production of material at the very frontiers of technology, not only in engineering and electronics but in physics and chemistry with potential dangers for safety within and without the establishments. We heard the hon. Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Rogers]

Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) talk of the serious problems that could occur in the Cardiff residential area if there happened to be an escape of, for example, beryllium gases. That is possible unless security and safety are tightly controlled.

Someone said to me, "Why are you bothered about this Bill? Many weapons are produced by private companies." Of course, under this Government, with the giveaway of Royal Ordnance, almost all the production of weapons is now in private hands. This is different. We are not talking about aeroplanes, ships, tanks or weapon delivery systems, but about the ultimate explosives being constantly enhanced through research at these establishments.

We shall wish to discuss many issues in Committee, not least those raised, rightly, by the hon. Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant) about the precise position on pensions. Other hon. Members on both sides have mentioned the security of employment of those presently working in the establishments. Will they have jobs for the period of a contract? For my sins, I happen to be a geologist by profession and I worked for some time on contracts that were for a specific period.

If we give a contract to a private company, will we be telling it to take on workers under a specific contract, or will it be told, "Treat your workers as you like"? Will the Government wash their hands of the workers once they have been handed over to the private contractors? Is that what it is about? We shall pursue that matter in Committee. Conservative Members are now feeling the pinch that has been felt over the past 10 years under this Government by hon. Members in Wales, Scotland and the north of England because substantial numbers of their constituents may be thrown out of work.

As I said, the physical framework and fabric—the buildings and surroundings—of the atomic weapons establishments are in an appalling condition. The Government know that that is so. At Aldermaston we have had one of the most appalling examples of the Government's inefficiency and mismanagement of the defence industry. The construction of the A90 buildings is a saga of cost and time overruns, overcharging and profiteering. It is a sad and sorry mess and, in the near future, I am sure that it will lead to criminal charges. Not even this Government can sweep that amount of dirt under the carpet.

The Minister knows about that, because the information has been laid before the Ministry of Defence. It has not acted upon it yet, but it will eventually because it will have to. The problem is not just the buildings and problems with the roof, but items such as stainless steel tanks that have welding problems and may, for example, allow the emission of toxic gases into the atmosphere. Similar gases may be released into the Cardiff area.

That work was done to British Nuclear Fuels specifications, was privately constructed and inspected and approved by the Ministry of Defence yet it had to be done all over again because it was unsafe. Who picked up the bill for the extra millions of expenditure? The taxpayer. That does not fill me with confidence about the proposals in the Bill for the production, the supervision of both performance and safety, and the ultimate delivery of the finished product—the nuclear warhead—on time. I am at a loss to understand how some of the proposals will operate, and we shall explore them in Committee.

Another point that we shall examine in Committee is the relationship of sub-contractors within the contracts. In paragraph 303 of this year's defence estimates, the Government said:

> "On all contracts worth more than £1 million we review with the prime contractor his plans for awarding sub-contract work, paying special attention to sub-contracts to his subsidiaries."

Where in the Bill is that assurance carried through to this contractorisation? Will the Government inspect sub-contractors or will they simply hand over inspection to the contractors? I am worried about not only the health and safety aspect but the performance of sub-contractors within the overall contracts.

Incidentally, I noticed that in paragraph 304 of the estimate, the Government said:

> "We firmly believe in the advantages of prime contractors managing projects on our behalf . . .. Taut contracts with firm or fixed prices and the use of payments linked to achievements give the prime contractor a clear interest in speedy and efficient development and production."

That is quite a departure for the Government. I am not sure how they will achieve that aim. They have never done so in the past 10 years.

During the opening speech by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, I, like several other hon. Members, was disappointed by his response to a question about consultation with the trade union movement. He had an absolute ideological block. A gate dropped and he said, "No, we will not consult." The Minister was at pains to say that only the views of Members of Parliament could be considered. His words were, "Parliament is supreme." That is ironic because the only reason why we are discussing this matter tonight is that the Government are determined to pass the AWEs out of the control of Parliament. On one aspect, the Minister beats his breast about the strength and supremacy of this place, yet the Government spend all their time moving responsibility for issues such as this out of this Chamber. Therefore, they make public accountability even more difficult.

Sir David Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman seems to have misconstrued what my hon. Friend the Minister of State said. My hon. Friend said that consultation in Committee could be only with Members of Parliament. Clearly, that is correct.

Mr. Rogers: Yes. I know that that is what the Minister hedged back on. But those of us who know the Minister and some of the Conservative Members present readily identify the ideological block which arose as soon as the words "trade unions" were mentioned.

The Minister also gave some reasons for the exemptions in the schedule. A Conservative Member, not I, said that he did not find the reasons convincing. Nor do Opposition Members. The privileges and immunities which clause 3 extends to the new GOCOs are matters which we shall examine closely in Committee. We give the Minister warning now that we might spend long hours on the schedule, because its effect is to exempt the AWE from most of the controls that would apply to privately owned factories.

It is intended that 13 Acts of Parliament will be suspended including the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Explosives Act 1923 and the Planning

(Hazardous Substances) Act 1990. I am not yet convinced that the new compliance body is capable of protecting the public interest. The exemptions may protect the Crown —that is what they are for—but that is of little help to people who work in or live near the AWEs. As the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said, we shall want to examine the legal basis of the compliance office.

I have taken my allocation of time. As I said, the proposals are the Government's response to their incompetence and inability to run the AWEs. We believe, as do some Conservative Members, that there are better ways to resolve the problems. We shall oppose the measure here and in Committee.

6.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): This has been a useful debate and in the time available I shall seek to respond to the points raised. If I cannot do so, I shall write to hon. Members on the matters which they raised. I look forward to the careful scrutiny of the Bill in Committee. I am encouraged to feel that we might survey at great leisure the highways and byways of the Rhondda constituency. I am sure that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has much to teach us about his constituency.

This is a technical Bill and it must be argued closely. I shall listen carefully to the points made in Committee, because it is important in a Bill of this nature to get it absolutely right. I pay tribute right at the beginning of my speech to the people who work at the AWEs. I have had the privilege of meeting some of them and I shall meet more. They are dedicated people. Many have worked in the establishments for many years, serving the country. I recognise their skill and dedication and, as I shall describe later, we intend fully to protect their position.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) asked about consultation. His point was correct. We take seriously the need to consult everyone who might be affected by the Bill. Whenever I go to the establishments, I make sure that I meet the trade union representatives. I shall listen carefully to what they say about the Bill. I want to know their fears, because they represent the people who will be affected. Indeed, many of the points raised by hon. Members in the debate are the same as those made to me by people in the trade unions.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My hon. Friend the Minister has given some helpful assurances. The staff at AWE Foulness, some of whom are my constituents, have been confused by the assurances given to them over a period. When consideration of the Bill is completed, would not it be helpful if every member of staff were given a small sheet of paper outlining the various assurances given? If the facts are known it might help to remove many of the uncertainties that have arisen.

Mr. Carlisle: My hon. Friend makes a good point. We have developed good lines of communication. We are sending out to the staff various pieces of paper that explain our approach to pensions and so forth. However, his point about communications is important.

I remind the House of the purpose of the Bill. At its heart is our need to ensure that we manufacture our nuclear deterrent in the most effective way possible. That is our duty at the Ministry of Defence. The operations of the AWEs combine research and development and manufacturing. It is our experience and belief that those activities are managed far better in the private than in the public sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Mr. Durant) asked why the AWE could not remain an agency. The truth is that agency status does not provide the flexibility to employ the necessary people or full professional management. At the halfway stage, there are only 20 people from the private sector and they cannot bring all the skills to manage this manufacturing facility to the best of their ability. We have learnt the lesson that manufacturing is best done by people in the private sector. In the manufacture of atomic warheads, it is absolutely essential that the assets remain owned by the Government. That is why the Government will continue to own the buildings, machinery and equipment in the establishment. The contract that we draw up with the contractors will define clearly the parameters of their activities.

Many hon. Members are worried about safety. My hon. Friends the Members for Hampshire, North-West, for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones) and for Reading, West asked about it. I am glad to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West that our hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) is making good progress. I also know of his interest. Labour Members have also voiced their anxiety about safety.

Safety is a key concern. It will be built into the heart of the contract. We already have many safeguards and more will be added after the contract. The safety division, which will continue, will report to the chief executive as it does now. The Health and Safety Executive has an important part to play in the supervision of safety and will continue that activity.

There is one additional safeguard. At present, the Government own and run the AWE and cannot be prosecuted. After full contractorisation if the employer contravenes the health and safety provisions, he can be prosecuted. There will be an extra layer of safety. A compliance office will be well manned by Ministry of Defence officials and will ensure that all safety aspects are fully complied with. If, by some unimaginably stupid act, the contractor fails to comply with safety as he should, the compliance office can cancel the contract. If it does so, it will be easy for the Ministry of Defence to return the AWE to Government management. That facility exists in the Bill.

I had an interesting, enjoyable and instructive visit to the plant at Cardiff. The employees there told me that they were worried about safety. They would be absolutely certain to make their fears known if there were any likelihood of their being asked to do anything that was unsafe or involved unsafe practices. Our best policemen for safety are the employees themselves.

We have had a substantial building programme to improve buildings and make them safer. In contrast to what the hon. Member for Rhondda says, the A90 building has been finished. It is safe and modern. The problems faced there are a good example of how badly managed buildings often are in the public sector.

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Carlisle: I have too little time.

The ultimate guarantee of safety is that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is ultimately responsible for the safety at AWE.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West asked about radiation. It is important to note that the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment said that radiation from Aldermaston was negligible and could not endanger local people. Everyone who has contact wears dose meters and is monitored. Our aim is to reduce exposure to radiation. At present, one is exposed to less radiation in Aldermaston than in the natural environment—less than 2 mSv a year.

Hon. Members raised the important matter of security. Obviously, in the production of nuclear warheads everyone has an interest in security. The Ministry of Defence police will look after security, as they do now. They will remain employed by the Ministry of Defence and security will be their responsibility. There will also be proper vetting of everyone who works there by the Ministry of Defence, as there is now.

All hon. Members are anxious about employment conditions. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said, we shall ensure that the conditions of those who are transferred from the civil service to employment under a contractor will be protected.

Many of my hon. Friends asked about pensions. I can give the commitment that pensions will be as good in future as they are now. They will be index-linked. Moreover, we shall consult fully. We intend to issue a document in January—we hope to do so before the Committee stage starts—and to discuss it.

Mr. O'Neill: Can the Minister say whether staff who are taken on after contractorisation will have index-linked pensions?

Mr. Carlisle: Those people will have access to the same pension scheme as we shall negotiate for the employees who transfer. Moreover, for the first time some employees will be trustees who will help to look after the terms and conditions of the pension fund. We give that guarantee. I know what a worry it is. In the same way, if anyone should be made redundant—I do not in the least expect it, because our programme for the nuclear deterrent is firm—the redundancy terms will be as good as they are now.

AWE employees will have greater scope. They will be away from bureaucracy and its frustrations. As properly managed people with great skills, they will have greater scope.

Many other important points were raised and I look forward to debating them in Committee. This is a technical Bill and we must be careful.

This is a simple Bill, the aim of which is to enable us to be certain of meeting our nuclear weapons programmes in the most effective way possible. It is important for national security. At the same time, we are committed, above all, to the safety and security of the operation and our proposals will ensure that. We shall safeguard the terms and conditions of employment of the work force and ensure that pensions will be just as good as they would have been without this change.

In reality, management by the private sector within the secure ownership of the Government will lead to a more efficient operation and better prospects for the employees. This is a practical and sensible way forward, and I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 292, Noes 221.

Division No. 34] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy

Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Adams, Mrs. Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul

Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mr. John McFall.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Heathrow Express Railway Bill [*Lords*]
(By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

7.13 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to enable the construction and operation of a high quality, high speed, dedicated mainline rail link between Heathrow airport and Paddington station. Heathrow is the largest airport in terms of international passengers handled and, excluding the United States, the largest by any means. That has been achieved with the skill and foresight of those in the aviation industry, who have built on our geographical advantage to create an airport second to none.

Many competitors, particularly in Paris and Amsterdam, would like to take over that lead, and one way to do that is to make provision for better ground access. Access to Heathrow is by motorway, trunk roads and a wide range of public transport, including the London underground. That is currently adequate, but unless there is provision soon for wider choice, congestion and overcrowding will spoil the otherwise excellent and efficient service now provided to the aviation industry.

The idea of a mainline railway link to Heathrow is not new. Powers were obtained in 1967 for a link on the southern region. Those powers lapsed after Government studies led to the Piccadilly line being extended to the airport. In the airports inquiry of 1981 to 1983, the inspector recognised that surface access to Heathrow needed improving, and recommended that a mainline rail link be considered. The Government accepted that, and initiated the Heathrow surface access studies in 1985, with a remit to examine a report on surface links between central London and Heathrow airport. It was from those studies that the current proposals emerged. They involved wide-ranging consultation and examining numerous schemes, different London termini, alternative routes and proposals, both by road and rail.

The joint British Rail-BAA proposal was chosen in 1988 by the Government from a number of competing schemes, and plans have been developed in considerable detail and refined since then. Its construction would immediately help in reducing pressure on the M4, other roads in west London and the crowded Piccadilly line.

The Heathrow Express Railway Bill was deposited in another place in November 1988. After its Second Reading in February 1989——

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Could my hon. Friend quantify the amount of relief that the scheme would give to the heavily congested M4 and A4, in particular the A4 Cromwell road, between one and five miles to the west of central London, which affects not only my constituents but those of many other Members in west London and beyond?

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend will be aware that a reduction of a relatively small percentage in numerical terms can have a considerable effect on the road network. I am sure that, over the August holiday period, he has witnessed a reduction of 5 or 10 per cent. in the volume of traffic, which can considerably speed up journey times. Any saving must be enormously helpful, but quite a

number of taxi and car journeys to Heathrow would be made unnecessary if the proposal were brought into effect, which would create the desired advantage.

The subject was considered in Committee in April and May of 1989. The Committee was concerned about the effect of the surface section of the route on green belt land. The promoters responded positively by introducing an additional provision that routed the railway underground, at an additional cost of about £12 million.

The Heathrow express is a joint project between BAA plc, formerly the British Airports Authority, now in the private sector, and British Rail. BAA can be involved in such a project now that it is a private sector company and brings to the enterprise an unrivalled understanding of the air passenger market and considerable financial strength. British Rail brings its undoubted operational experience as the operator of some of the busiest short-distance routes in the world, as well as its strength in marketing the project as part of the national railway network.

The key to the Heathrow express is the high-quality, high-speed, dedicated nature of the service. It is designed to serve air passengers wanting to get to and from Heathrow and central London. The proposed service is for trains to operate from 5 am to 11.30 pm—outside those hours, very few flights operate from the airport. It is proposed that trains should run every 15 minutes. The journey time from Paddington to Heathrow, terminals 1, 2 and 3, will be 16 minutes and to terminal 4, 20 minutes —a dramatic improvement on the existing form of travel.

The trains will be specially designed, electric multiple units with provision for large amounts of baggage. They will be fully accessible to passengers with disabilities.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): As a supporter of the Bill, may I point out to my hon. Friend that the road journey is unreliable? One has to leave at least an hour early in either direction. Only last evening, returning from parliamentary duties abroad, I was delayed on the underground for an hour, for technical reasons, on my way to vote in the House.

Mr. Thorne: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. The new service would be a marked improvement, and it is something that we must have if Heathrow is to compete with other European airports.

High-quality information will be a key feature, available on board from BAA or from special displays. The trains will be driven by British Rail drivers.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I apologise to the House and to my hon. Friend for not being present for the start of his speech. He has just finished speaking about the route, but does he remember that I have raised the question of a westward-facing link, so that trains from south Wales, the west country and the south-west can travel directly into Heathrow? Does he agree that the BAA, by having use of what are the primary pieces of railway line in this country, has a public duty? Can he give an assurance that, at some point during the passage of the Bill—as those who support it do not want to be disruptive at a later stage—he will consider an amendment to provide for land to be reserved, and if necessary for provision to be made, for that important westward-facing link?

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend is an acknowledged expert on the railway system, and I am sure that he joins in my feeling of delight that a lot of money is to be spent in this way. He will appreciate that the scheme must stand on its own feet financially. Nothing in the Bill will prevent a connection to the west in due course if demand arises, but we must be satisfied that there is such a demand. At present, it does not seem to exist—but as soon as such a link becomes viable, I am sure that it could be introduced.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The relevance of the intervention of the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) is recognised in all parts of the House, but I am concerned also about a possible link with the former Southern Railway line, west of Feltham. Right hon. and hon. Members will want to ensure that the new service is not built in isolation but will form part of the over all rail network. It should have connections both to the south and the west. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it will be feasible to provide a step-plate junction, or a series of such junctions, to allow the line to be extended to the former Southern Railway link near Feltham at some future date? Can he indicate the promoters' intentions in that regard?

Mr. Thorne: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to that important aspect. I believe that it is hoped that there will eventually be a link to the south, but that too will depend on the viability of such a service. It is important to ensure that any expenditure at this stage is not out of context with the scheme's overall cost. It should be possible to examine the provision of a link such as the hon. Gentleman suggests, but cost will be an important factor. It would be wrong to add to the expense of the whole project, and thus to the ticket costs of those people who use the service, by introducing too elaborate a connection. However, it is the intention to explore that possibility.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) will know from his vast experience of the railways that, whatever view may be held of where a junction should be introduced, after five years or so, engineers often reach the conclusion that it was not the right choice of location, so a lot of the expense can prove to be abortive. Bitter experience has shown that it is not always wise to spend too much money on providing such a facility too early in a scheme.

Mr. Snape: Right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House will be disappointed with the hon. Gentleman's reply. He must appreciate that the provision of such a junction, or a series of such junctions, in a tunnel is extremely difficult and expensive—and if that provision is not made at this stage, it is unlikely that it will be done in future, except at enormous expense. I appreciate the difficulties in which the hon. Gentleman finds himself, but unless that aspect is considered sympathetically in Committee, the passage of the Bill is likely to be more protracted than it would be, given a more sympathetic reply from the promoter.

Mr. Thorne: I intended to make it clear that that aspect had been sympathetically considered already, and that much work had been devoted to it. Certainly, the question of providing some form of demountable section in the tunnel is being considered, and further consideration will be given to that aspect in Committee. It is the promoters' wish to make the new rail link as profitable and successful an enterprise as they can. However, much will depend on the final overall cost of such an enhancement. If it runs into many millions of pounds, it would be wrong unfairly

[Mr. Thorne]

to weight the ticket prices for passengers using that dedicated line and thereby make the whole scheme unviable.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Once the Bill has passed through its Committee stage, right hon. and hon. Members may want to take a view on how much of the scheme's costs the promoters should bear and how much should be considered and extraneity. We are now 100 years on from the opening of the line between Stockwell and King William street, which led on over 17 years to a mammoth expansion of the London underground system. If every new infrastructure project is to be half-blocked in the House of Commons for years, few new projects will come forward, because managers will say that they take too long to go through.

I hope that we will find a way of allowing some extra provision to come forward, so that one can consider a viable project together with a few add-ons. Further infrastructure projects will be necessary if we are to double our standard of living again over the next 30 years. A part of that doubling will require infrastructure projects relating to mass-transit operations.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend has vast experience of the transport sector. I assure him that the promoters are most anxious that the scheme will be effective and viable. I accept that there are other possibilities for the project, to which I shall refer later. No doors are being closed, and we shall try to ensure that the link caters for the 21st century —which is what it is all about.

Paddington Station will have a pair of platforms dedicated to the Heathrow express, where there will always be a train waiting and a special ticket office will be provided. The taxi and car set down and pick up arrangements are to be modified to ensure a better balance between demand and supply. The express platforms, which will be centrally located, will give easy and level access to taxi ranks and car waiting areas, with simple routes to new escalators that will lead to the London underground. The rearrangement of taxi operations will have the added benefit of reducing rat runs for vehicles through nearby residential streets.

I know that some local residents would like a much more radical change in Paddington's road access arrangements, and British Rail discussed that in detail with Westminster city council. The promoters would also be happy to see that happen, and there would seem to be a window of opportunity to achieve it in conjunction with the construction of platforms for the proposed crossrail link.

Works numbered 1A to 5 provide for the construction of the branch line from the Great Western main line near Stockley Bridge to Heathrow airport. The works begin as a twin-track, cut-and-cover tunnel, continuing as a bored tunnel beneath the M4 and open green belt land. Beneath the airport there will be two stations, one serving terminals 1, 2 and 3 and the other serving terminal 4, each with direct links to the terminal buildings via lifts and escalators, including provision for wheelchairs and for baggage trolleys. The bored tunnel between the two stations will be a single track. The construction of massive stations beneath busy airport terminal areas requires careful planning.

Works numbered 6A to 9 provide for the construction of an airport junction. As the express will be using the existing western region fast main line from Paddington in conjunction with the 125 mph inter-city high speed trains, a junction must allow for high-speed points, deceleration and acceleration lanes and flyover for the up eastbound airport branch line.

Disruption to existing operations will be minimised, and local residents will be protected by some special environmental protection measures. Houses next to the existing main line currently experience noise from existing trains. A special green wall, designed to blend in with the railway embankment, will help to reduce noise levels from existing trains and the quieter Heathrow express trains. Some former gravel pits in the area have become ecologically important in the short period since they were dug; the promoters will be taking steps to minimise interference and more than replace areas lost.

Works numbered 10 to 13 permit bridge raising to allow overhead electric wires to be installed on all four mainline tracks at various locations between Hayes and Harlington and Paddington. Other works on the main line for which new powers are not needed include modifications to track works and the installation of new signalling which will also benefit passengers on existing services to the west of England and south Wales.

In order to undertake the works, land and rights have to be purchased and part III provides the power to do so. No house will need to be demolished. Some Government vacant land associated with the Public Record Office has to be acquired. As most of the line runs in tunnel, little land has to be acquired on the surface except for emergency escape shafts and landscaping. However, some land is required for temporary use for a number of working sites.

Part IV contains the normal protective provisions. Within part V, which covers miscellaneous and general matters, is clause 38. That seeks to disapply sections 54 and 56 of the Transport Act 1962. That is necessary because the line, being designed as a special airport link, would be inhibited if the need to consult over closure proposals caused further delays and financial losses. There is no provision for the payment of a public service obligation grant for this line in the unlikely event that it should not prove to be profitable.

All those works add up to a very expensive project, some £235 million at 1989 prices, 80 per cent. of which is to be funded by the BAA and the remainder by BR. The two parties have entered into a joint venture agreement which determines their rights, responsibilities and obligations, and sets out how the income is to be shared. BR's basic return is guaranteed, but there are also incentives in the form of bonus and penalty payments to ensure that the trains run to a strict time-keeping schedule.

The Bill allows for the linking of Heathrow airport to the United Kingdom's mainline railway network. The initial proposals are straightforward and seek to serve a specific market. However, once linked to the network, many other services become possible, some requiring no new powers or infrastructure, while others require modest additions.

While ultimately any decision on which additional services should be run will be for the operators, they will clearly want to take into account the views of users and representative groups. Clearly, one attractive possibility is through operation to Liverpool street and beyond via

crossrail, with some trains stopping at intermediate stations. In the longer term, the possibilities for extensions and additions are wide, and the promoters' strategy is to ensure that none of those possibilities are precluded. An example would be for a west-facing link which could be added in a number of ways, such that, if the western region mainline is electrified, trains could operate into Heathrow from the west.

Mr. Adley: The western region main line is due to be electrified from Reading as part of crossrail. If my hon. Friend—I do not say this unkindly—reads the railway press avidly, as I am sure he does, he will know that his comment a moment ago about being linked to the main-line system of BR would be regarded as somewhat cynical, when in fact it is only linked to westbound trains coming out of Paddington.

In response to my first intervention, my hon. Friend said that those things would be looked at. Will he give me an assurance that, during the Bill's passage, there will be a full cost-benefit analysis and a further evaluation by British Rail, as a partner in the project, of the advantages to people from the west country, south Wales, Birmingham and so on, of a west-facing link?

Does my hon. Friend understand that, if he is seeking, as he must be doing, to maximise revenue for the Bill's sponsors, there must be some evaluation of how much extra traffic could be brought into Heathrow by rail if people from, say, Bristol, did not have to whiz past the junction, go into Paddington, get off with all their luggage, transfer to another platform and then go back along the route that they had just travelled? Will he please give an assurance that, before the Bill finishes its passage through the House, we shall be presented with a proper evaluation of that?

Mr. Thorne: I do not read the railway press as avidly as my hon. Friend, but I read it quite closely. I am sure that he will be aware that the traffic which comes from other areas to Heathrow airport is relatively small and that that is why such a link is not as attractive as it might otherwise be. For example, I believe that only 1·5 per cent., 2 per cent. at the most, of the traffic using Heathrow comes from Wales.

Mr. Adley: Because there is no railway.

Mr. Thorne: But they have their own airports, and I am anxious that not all passengers should come to London, because that is what makes roads so difficult. My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) complained about the amount of road traffic going through his constituency. We must have a balance in these matters. The matter has been evaluated, and the promoters find that it is not cost-effective at the moment. When the network is electrified into Wales, there is no earthly reason why such a scheme should not be taken up at that time.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my hon. Friend seek to ensure that, so far as possible during the Bill's passage, he engenders a favourable climate for the laying down of not only the link to the west but the one to the south, and the rail infrastructure to make possible a fifth terminal? That is the long-term potential of the airport, which will be nullified unless proper rail links are put in in advance.

Mr. Jessel: Rubbish.

Mr. Thorne: My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) will see that there is some resistance to his suggestion. The question of a fifth terminal is not one that we are here to discuss tonight, so I shall quickly pass on.

Mr. Snape: I think that I speak on behalf of hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that we are aware of the difficulties the hon. Gentleman faces in introducing this legislation, which he is doing in such an able way.

The hon. Gentleman said earlier that it was not cost-effective for the promoters to accept a west-facing link at this time. Of course it is not, because the promoters' only interest is in ferrying as many people as possible from Paddington to Heathrow airport. But will he accept it from me that about 5 million people currently use the coach links from Reading and Woking, and it is joining up Reading and Woking with a line through Heathrow that we are about in the instruction which, sadly, for understandable reasons, has not been accepted? Is not 5 million a substantial number, bearing in mind that it will inevitably grow in the 1990s?

Mr. Thorne: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the promoters will look carefully at the link. There is no question of their ruling it out.

Mr. Snape: Are the Government?

Mr. Thorne: If the Government should decide to come forward with some funds to help the promoters on some future occasion, that is a different matter. Tonight, we are discussing the Heathrow Express Railway Bill. I hope that all hon. Members will welcome such a measure as a first step. We should not pull the idea down, because that would remove the opportunity for expansion into a number of other areas which many other people want. We must leave the options open and speed the passage of this Bill——

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): This procedure clarifies matters. Part of the difficulty is the lack of a coherent Government policy for railways. If only there were a double Y junction at Harlington and another one at Feltham, all would be clear: people could go from Reading to Heathrow, Croydon and perhaps on to Brighton.

As for crossrail, does the hon. Gentleman agree that a single terminal at Paddington has a disadvantage? Would it not be possible to run suburban trains through to Stratford and possibly Stansted, and to provide an extended dedicated service, to be run on the Gatwick principle, a little further into London, so as to have an alternative destination with all sorts of advantages over the proposal for a single terminal?

Mr. Thorne: It would not be possible to do that under the present proposal. It is an excellent idea to provide the public with a good, efficient, fast and reliable service. It would be unfortunate to spread out that service by sending it to different locations at this stage, but this is only a step in the right direction. In the 21st century, many more facilities will be required.

I am sure that opportunities for crossrail and approaches from the south will materialise. The question is how and when, but I am afraid that we are not here to discuss that tonight. It would be quite wrong to divert our

[Mr. Thorne]

attention from this essential measure if we are to maintain our position as an international air centre, which is the objective of the Bill. The strategy is one of flexible response, but it must be made clear that, until the initial link is provided, no additions, extensions or long-term strategy are possible.

I began by referring to Heathrow's competitors, which want to steal its valuable position and which are therefore developing new mainline rail links to their airports. In many ways, they are just catching up on our lead. In so doing, they will employ the latest designs and operating techniques to make the links as effective as possible.

Arguably, London has already waited too long for a fast rail link to its principal airport. If the House agrees, it will be possible for the first train to run in 1995, 10 years after the planning process started. The Heathrow express project will then allow Heathrow to maintain its lead and even increase it by ensuring that passengers have the widest choice of flights and services and the widest choice of transport opportunities. I urge the House to support the Bill.

7.43 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) made a good point. It was remiss of me not to inform the House earlier that Mr. Speaker has not selected the instruction, but the topic of it can be commented on in the course of the debate.

Mr. Morgan: There is little point in repeating material already covered in depth in the carry-over debate, but it is worth repeating one fundamental point that emerged from it a month ago. Since the former Secretary of State for Transport, who has now departed to a thousand hurrahs, made his great announcement on 9 October about the London crossrail link from Paddington to Liverpool Street—it had greater significance in its backwash effect, as it included the announcement of the first 40 miles of the Great Western main line between Paddington and Reading—it has become clear that this Bill should be withdrawn and studied again by the promoters and then re-presented to the House taking into account that momentous announcement at the Conservative party conference. Ninety per cent. of the length of the line in this Bill is on the Great Western main line, but when it was originally planned and presented the Government had made no commitment to electrifying the south Wales main line beyond the point at which it passes just north of Heathrow airport. Now that there is such a commitment, we are in a different ball game.

The promoters could have gone away for four months and realised that, as the Government are committed to electrification through to Reading, they had a different set of options and modalities for integrating the different power modes, different junctions and different expenditures—because the Government will carry out part of the job, by means of the usual British Rail external financing limit, which the promoters had thought they would have to carry out on their own. Now the Government are committed to crossrail, taking electrification from Reading to Paddington, linking through to Liverpool Street and connecting with services to the eastern region of British Rail straight through to Paddington——

Mr. Spearing: Not connected all the way.

Mr. Morgan: Not completely, but the potential for such connection has been brought much nearer.

In this context, the point made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) becomes even more important. Since the announcement of the crossrail approval by the Government, Paddington has become a far more critical station. Traditionally it has been a friendly home from home for people from south Wales, Bristol and central southern England, and the home of commuter services to the western part of the home counties. All of a sudden the station has acquired the additional function of providing, as the promoters would have it, the main link for high-speed transport from central London to Heathrow. Paddington will become the hub, the most important railway station in Britain and one of the half dozen most important stations in western Europe.

So the promoters will have to take into account the much greater pressure on Paddington that will result from crossrail being added to the Heathrow connection, on top of the traditional role that the station has played since the days of Isambard Kingdom Brunel and the early connections to Bristol and south Wales a century and more ago.

Members of Parliament have a duty to rub our brain cells together and not just to give the Bill a free passage. We must try to imagine how the connections are supposed to work together. We must ask ourselves what the total impact on the planning of Paddington station will be, with crossrail, the Heathrow express and the traditional services. This is not merely a selfish concern of hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) and myself about longer queues for taxis at Paddington when we are rushing to get to Welsh Question Time on a Monday afternoon. Paddington has the potential to become the most important and best-planned station in western Europe—or to become the most important and worst-planned, if the project is carried out piecemeal.

The promoters suggest that when crossrail comes along it will be separate, and that Paddington's traditional links to south Wales are different, too. These are not separate aspects: all these services will pass through Paddington. The station cannot expand sideways into densely packed Paddington—that is out of the question—so how will all the traffic fit together?

Mr. Spearing: We are talking not about connections to Liverpool Street but about through services of any sort of combination from Liverpool Street on to Stratford, Cambridge or Ipswich—including possibly to Stratford international. What my hon. Friend said about Paddington's expansion was, happily for him, incorrect. Is he aware that British Rail has a huge site north of Paddington which is empty and which may well be disposed of for some form of development?

As regards overall planning, would it not be wise at least to ensure that space is made available for additional extensions to Paddington if they become necessary for the reasons that my hon. Friend has just advanced?

Mr. Morgan: I defer to my hon. Friend's detailed knowledge of London and its railway system. I was pointing out that there are two schools of thought on the Bill. There are supporters of the enclave principle of railway connection, and supporters of the connection school of railway development. The enclave school of thought is represented by the sponsor and the promoters of the Bill. They think that we should consider the link as an isolated piece of development, serving central London and Heathrow. The link will run on the western region main line for 10 of its 12 or 13 miles, but nevertheless they think of it as if it were on an island, not connected to the national railway system. They think that it is entirely accidental that it has anything to do with the western region main line.

The other school of thought is that, as it will run on the western region main line, hon. Members should consider the national dimension of the Bill. That line does not merely go to Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea but proceeds on to Fishguard and the Irish ferries, so it is an international line. Through the link from Didcot to Oxford, Banbury and Birmingham, the line connects with the rest of the midlands, the north and Scotland and offers an alternative route, instead of the better-known route from Euston.

It will not come as any surprise that I favour utilising the desire of the British Airports Authority and British Rail to co-operate in spending several hundred millions of pounds to provide a high-speed connection between central London and Heathrow. I want to see whether we can use the potential that it offers to open up Heathrow so that it will perform its proper function, as Great Britain's number one international airport.

Heathrow is not merely central London's international airport. It has been pointed out that we have an airport in south Wales. So we do—I live about six miles from it, and it is a nice regional airport, but in no sense of the word can it be considered a competitor for Heathrow. It does not have any regular, year-round international, transatlantic or intercontinental connections but merely a modest four international destinations, served by scheduled flights on a regular basis, and another four within the United Kingdom. That is not competition for Heathrow.

People from south Wales, Bristol, Oxford, Swindon or anywhere else in south-west and central England who want to fly to Nicaragua or to Thailand have to go to Heathrow. People will always have to use Heathrow for intercontinental destinations, and that is what people who live outside central London resent most. Heathrow is regarded as the private concern of people who live in central London. The House is regarded as a club for people who occupy positions of influence in central London.

When hon. Members request that the promoters of such Bills consider the interests of six sevenths of the population who do not live in central London, we are thought to be obstructing the people of importance who live there. That is nonsense. We are the Parliament of Great Britain. The only opportunity for the vast majority of people who do not live in central London to make Bills more relevant to them is to utilise the procedures of the House, and to table amendments for consideration by the promoters which, if viable, will be added to the Bill.

I am surprised that the sponsor has not mentioned the publication of the National Economic Development Council report, which has taken place since the carry-over motion. I have a pre-publication copy here. It is called, "On the Right Track to Heathrow Airport" and was released to the press on 10 December. It was widely referred to in the press last week. The National Economic Development Council was seeking to look after the long-term interests of Heathrow, as our most important airport—it is also, although not in freight terms, the most important international airport in western Europe. In the report, the NEDC makes it clear—the NEDC is one of those tripartite bodies of which the Government do not approve, as it brings in the unions and the employers——

Mr. Snape: They do now; it is the new image.

Mr. Morgan: Sorry, I had forgotten about the classless society. Perhaps the NEDC is coming back into favour now.

The report also makes a reference to the work of an hon. Member who is present tonight—the famous pamphlet, "Tunnel Vision, Rail Routes to the Channel Tunnel"—so it is obviously an excellent publication.

The report referred to the development of Heathrow as being dependent on a rolling programme of improvement. Stage 1 would be the approval of the Bill tonight. Stage 2 would be the construction of a westward-facing link, which would bring the connection from Heathrow to the south Wales main line somewhere near Slough, thereby providing a link to the airport for the people who live in the catchment area of Reading, Didcot, Oxford, Swindon, Bristol, Newport, Cardiff and Swansea—the population in that area is exactly the same as the population of London, about 6 million or 7 million people.

Almost everyone, except the promoters of the Bill, understands the connection between the Bill and the westward-facing link, which would be the logical next step. Therefore, I find it odd that the sponsor has so far been unable to say that the promoters have made any undertaking showing that they are willing to consider how to connect the link provided for by the Bill with the logical next step of integrating Heathrow with the national railway system. The aim of the express railway is not merely to carry passengers from Heathrow airport into London, via Paddington.

7.57 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I offer my warmest congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on the way in which he has managed the Bill through the House, and especially on his typical thoroughness and courtesy in responding to the inquiries and concerns of his parliamentary colleagues.

My constituents in the City of Westminster certainly warmly welcome the principle of the new rail link to central London. I have no doubt that many of my constituents will greatly benefit from the new link when it comes into operation.

However, I must say a few words about the environmental and traffic problems that will arise because of this proposal. The impact of the link on central London is just as important as its impact at Heathrow airport and the concerns about traffic problems there which other hon. Members have mentioned.

City of Westminster council is concerned about the environmental impact of the new route and its impact on traffic in the Paddington area, given the expected growth in traffic on roads in that area arising from improvements to the A40, the M40 extensions, the predicted growth in

[Sir John Wheeler]

general traffic and rail patronage to Paddington, and significant developments already planned for the locality. Extra traffic at Paddington will have a knock-on effect on congestion on roads and the public transport network throughout the centre of London, and needs to be considered and planned for.

Many of my constituents, especially those living near Paddington station, consider that the promoters have underestimated the potential usage of the railway. The promoters' current estimates—6 million passengers per annum, of whom some 47 per cent. would use cars or taxis at Paddington—are considered cautious, even given the current throughput of Heathrow airport. Moreover, they do not take into account the construction of terminal 5, which would increase usage by at least 31 per cent.

The city council is attempting to secure the development of the Paddington area—which spans the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) as well as mine—in a balanced manner. Our residential population wants the council to implement policies to establish the area as one of mixed use, while protecting and enhancing the amenity of the existing residential area, which house a considerable number of people.

The council has emphasised the importance of traffic-related issues, and the need to plan comprehensively for the long term when considering the four major planning applications relating to the immediate Paddington area. As a result, considerable changes have been made to the applications which reduce their traffic impact. For example, one developer has cut the proposed car parking from 2,500 to 431 spaces, and is proposing to pay for a wide range of highway improvements in the vicinity of the station, including direct access to it off Bishops Bridge road.

Unfortunately, the negotiations between my local authority and the promoters have suggested—at least until tonight—that there is little evidence of long-term planning for Paddington station. That is a matter of great concern to my council and to local residents. For instance, the retention of the sub-standard ramp off Bishops Bridge road, which requires cars to stop and then proceed at about 4 mph, makes the movement of traffic very difficult. If the British Rail access scheme were part of a private development, my local authority simply would not approve it.

Alternative access from the north of the station, via Bishops Bridge road, would be superior in terms of traffic, safety, parking and environment. The city council has been pressing BR to adopt a scheme providing such access for some time. The council still feels that such a scheme could be fully integrated with crossrail, including the through running of Heathrow trains. I was glad to learn tonight from my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South that the crossrail development could involve that; I assure him that my authority and its residents would welcome it.

I know that my hon. Friend will convey my messages to the promoters. Let me emphasise the importance of thorough consideration and implementation of the traffic management aspects of the new route. Because of other major planning developments, the stress imposed on the immediate area is such that the control of traffic will be a crucial issue for the residential community for many years to come.

The problem of access to the station must be resolved, and soon, so that my local authority, which has to approve the applications, has time to reassure the public, who have an interest in planning applications, as well as ensuring that their environmental and residential objectives are met. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the keen interest that he has displayed in these matters—at least until this moment.

8.4 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I, too, welcome the Bill; but I find it extraordinary that, over 40 years, Heathrow has developed into a major international airport without having the benefit of a rail link. BAA plc is to be congratulated on having enabled itself to promote the Bill and also fund the new railway.

I have a constituency interest, in that I am concerned for both the continued success of Heathrow airport—which employs many of my constituents—and the relief of the traffic congestion caused by the airport. I believe that the new railway can contribute to both.

As for the quality of the rail link, the Heathrow Express will certainly compare favourably with the rail link connecting with Charles de Gaulle airport: there, it is necessary to board a bus to travel from the terminal to the station.

I hope very much that the new railway will be a success. Nevertheless, we should remember that it will provide a link only with the network to the north of the airport, and that there is a strong case for providing a link with the network to the south. I hope that the Committee will satisfy itself that the proposed works will not prejudice the provision of such a link.

The stations and tunnels that are to be built under the airport could be used—the stations certainly, and the tunnels as part—to provide that southern link, and I hope that the means will eventually be found. I also hope that the Committee will establish as far as possible that the method of construction will not preclude the provision of the southern link and that, within reason, the door will be kept open for it.

I understand from engineering consultants employed by the London borough of Hounslow that, for an additional £3 million—now—three sections of tunnel could be designed, rather wider than currently planned, so that the tunnels for a southern link could be let in later without the need for the railway to be closed while the work was being done. Letting in the tunnels could enable the northern link stations to be used for the southern link, too.

I realise that £3 million is a lot of money, and that the promoters must look to the potential customers for the financing of the development, at least at present. However, this is a modest sum compared with the £220 million being spent on the Heathrow express, and the £35 million that it would cost to shut the railway and join the tunnels with the southern link once the railway was in operation. We must keep the figures in perspective.

We do not yet know the extent to which, after its current venture, BAA plc will develop a taste for providing railway links with its airports. But whoever is in the

business of providing railways in the future will be more attracted to doing so if those modest steps are taken to keep open the possibility of a southern link.

A report by Colin Buchanan and Partners, which was commissioned by the London borough of Hounslow, shows that, in engineering, operational and environmental terms, a southern rail link to the airport is a practical possibility. A further report by Colin Buchanan and Partners for the London boroughs of Hounslow, Richmond, Kingston upon Thames, Merton and Sutton supports the practicality of an orbital rail link in south-west London. Several of my hon. Friends have also referred to the report by the National Economic Development Council, was published on 10 December, which supports those ideas in a much more general framework.

I hope that BAA plc, which has suggested that it will try to keep open as many options as possible, and which has already shown some agreement between the consultants on these matters, will continue to keep that option open. Therefore, I hope that the Committee will look carefully at the desirability of keeping open the option for a southern link and that, within reason, the money will be found for doing so because it will undoubtedly be very much more expensive to provide such as link in the future. Keeping that option open would encourage whoever is responsible for the provision of the railways to provide the further rail link which is very much needed because it would strengthen Heathrow and its surrounding environment.

8.11 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I sympathise with the points made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). We know that the promoters introduced the Bill to try to improve the surface access problems that exist at Heathrow. Those problems existed before terminal 4 was built, and have hardly improved since. The sponsors suggest that 6 million potential passengers will use the link, thus taking a great deal of traffic off the roads between central London and Heathrow. My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) has said that the sponsors must bear in mind the implications for terminal 5 and ensure that they get the link correct.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) is sitting quietly on the Front Bench—from his point of view, I hope that things remain that way—but may I advise him that a great deal of what needs to be done in connection with Heathrow, its surface access problem and the wider implications of the Bill is a matter for the Government, not the sponsors? One cannot expect BAA plc to fund surface access improvements between Heathrow and the Cromwell road. That is a matter for the Government, who should have an integrated transport policy for rail, road and air travel.

My hon. Friend the Minister has now turned to me and has a slight twinkle in his eye. He knows that it is impossible to talk about surface access to Heathrow, the rail link that we should have and the movement of aircraft, without thinking in terms of integration. It is no good the Government having a policy on aircraft movement, the railways and in connection with what the Civil Aviation Authority should be doing, if they do not think about the needs of terminal 5 at Heathrow. There can be no doubt that west-facing access is vital to the people of the west country and south Wales, as is the southern link. Although building the tunnel has some technical implications, in my view that is not the responsibility of BAA plc or British Rail; it is a matter for the Government.

I was opposed to the Bill from the outset because of the effect that it will have on my constituents, although I accept the principle behind it. I still believe that this is the wrong route and that it should run directly from Southall. However, I pay tribute to the sponsors for the way in which they have listened to the criticisms about the route —some constructive, some not—from people such as myself. The sponsors were criticised at first for their lack of consultation, but the consultation process has improved tremendously during the past year or so. Many of my constituents have been able to see the proposals in model form and there has been a hot line by which they could contact the sponsors to find out exactly what was going on.

As suggested by my local authority, the route has been amended to avoid fragmenting the green belt, at a cost to the promoters of £12 million. I am also grateful that, as a result of pressure—some from myself—the route will be taken under the M4 rather than over it, as was originally suggested. The noise and environmental implications for my constituents as the route comes out of Hayes station and turns left to cross the green belt towards Heathrow were matters of great concern, but I understand that a "green wall" is to be built, which will help to reduce the noise levels experienced by most of the residents who back on to the existing main line. To some extent, the green wall will not make all that much difference to some of those who will suffer extremely badly from noise, but the sponsors have agreed to make a financial contribution towards sound insulation to try to make life that bit more bearable for those people.

The disruption to Stockley lakes is important for both ecological and fishing reasons, but it will be minimised by the well thought-out development and management plan. Assurances have been given that the greatest care will be taken to avoid any hazards when dealing with landfill.

I still believe that, in due course, consideration should be given to a different route. However, it bears repeating that the sponsors have at last—I emphasise the words "at last"—responded to the needs of my constituents and to the pressures that I have brought to bear, along with other colleagues, and have made the adjustments and modifications that are necessary to make life bearable for my constituents.

Therefore, although I hope that the Bill receives its Second Reading tonight, I also hope that, in Committee, the sponsors will take on board some of the points that have been made tonight. The most important aspect of all this is that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench should put their heads together and start thinking in terms of integration. Money must be made available to make sure that we get it right, so that the people of south Wales, and those in my home town of Bristol, can have access to Heathrow without this nonsense of passing it by, going into Paddington and having to come out again. I hope that terminal 5 will soon begin the long process of construction, starting in my local authority. We must bear in mind the needs of terminal 5, which, again, is more a matter for the Government than for the sponsors——

Mr. Jessel: Surely my hon. Friend cannot imagine that his local borough council will be expected to decide the

[Mr. Jessel]

planning permission and that any future application for a fifth terminal will not result in a call-in, a public inquiry and a decision by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Dicks: My hon. Friend misunderstands me. I said that the start of the planning process would begin with my local authority. However, my hon. Friend is absolutely right, as he is about the musicians in his constituency: it will be a long-term process. I am sure that the matter will be called in and decided elsewhere.

As I have said, I hope that the Bill receives its Second Reading and that all the points that have been made by hon. Members will be taken into consideration by the promoters and by my hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

8.18 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I should perhaps make my speech short and say that, if the Bill satisfies my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), it satisfies me. His emollient tones bode well for the passage of the Bill. No one would criticise my hon. Friend for not exercising independent and constructive judgment on behalf of his constituents, as he always has and certainly has on this Bill, which is much the better for it.

The problem with the development of airports in this country has always been that far too little attention has been paid to the vital aspect of surface access. Lack of surface access, particularly rail access direct to passenger terminals, has caused congestion, with which we are all too familiar, and has damaged the potential development of airports. This is true of Luton, where there is no direct rail link; it has been so for a long time of Stansted; it was true until the Gatwick express was created for Gatwick; and, for far too long, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) pointed out, it has been true of Heathrow. The consequence for passengers and for those living around these airports has been the failure to exploit their economic potential and a degradation of the environment that was quite unnecessary.

This modest Bill—in financial terms, it is far from modest—will, I hope, be the precursor of further measures to put in place a fully strategic rail infrastructure for Heathrow and other key airports.

I know that my constituents have a double interest in the Bill: first, because anything that is good for Heathrow in international terms—rail access is a vital aspect of that matter—is good for them, as Heathrow is the main source of employment for my constituents, apart from central London; and, secondly, they ask whether it will improve their access to the airport. With the development of crossrail, this may be so. A station on the crossrail link from Aylesbury and Amersham at Northwood will enable them to travel at high speed through to the Paddington terminal and out to the airport.

More important, the rail link will significantly reduce the grave traffic congestion that bedevils west London, which is caused to a large extent by a lack of proper rail access to the Heathrow terminals.

My hon. Friends who argue for wider examination of the Bill's implications in Committee have logic and sense on their side. As I said, the Bill is a precursor of other measures, and we shall undoubtedly need that connection out to the west, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) so eloquently intervened, and the connection to the south, to which the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston alluded. If we are fully to utilise Heathrow's potential and preserve the local environment, we need to exploit the rail connections much more than is envisaged at present.

I hope that the good experience of the Bill and the installation of this rail link will set a necessary example to policy makers in the Department of Transport. Although the sponsors of the Bill—the BAA and the British Railways Board—deserve full credit for the impetus that they have put behind it and for their readiness to modify it, nevertheless it is the responsibility of the Department of Transport to ensure that the premier gateway to this country—Heathrow airport—has the proper rail access to the east, the west and the south which it deserves. I support the Bill.

8.23 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The remarkable aspect of this debate has been the unanimity on not only the desirability of this project but the need to widen and to extend it to take care of the transport needs of passengers from all over the United Kingdom who wish to travel to and from the busiest international airport and the need and desire to see this stretch of railway become a integral part of the British Rail network. As the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) reminded us, the crossrail should extend to the south, to the west and to the east.

Regrettably, the Bill does no such thing. For eminently understandable reasons, the interests of the former British Airports Authority, which is now BAA plc, lie in maximising the number of passengers who use its airports. Quite fairly, it does not see it as its role or responsibility to do more than that. That illustrates the weakness of the Government's transport philosophy—I would not deign to call it a policy, because a policy implies that something exists—which is that the market will provide these things and that it is the best judge of where resources are necessary and when and how they will be financed and implemented.

I was fascinated to listen to the speech of the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks)—I usually am fascinated to listen to the hon. Gentleman's speeches—who represents the intellectual wing of the Conservative party. He came out tonight as a closet integrator and demanded an integrated transport system. I very much doubt whether it will save him from the wrath of the electors at the next general election. I have a feeling that they will prefer the fervour of the real thing—socialist transport policy—to the fervour of the convert. His conversion, albeit late, is nevertheless welcome.

To a certain extent, we have heard a repeat of some of the arguments that were advanced in the debate on the carry-over motion a month ago. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), with his wit, humour and customary brevity, set out the needs and desires of passengers from Cardiff, the west and south west for a west-facing connection into Heathrow airport, as did

my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who spoke in the debate on that motion but is unable to be present this evening.

The reaction of British Rail's management to the proposals put forward by my hon. Friends and some Conservative Members was interesting. I have a letter from the "Director, Projects" of the British Railways Board to my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. On the specific question of the west-facing link, the director, Mr. David R. V. Beynon, said:

"You mentioned links for traffic from South Wales. I am sure you will appreciate that any additional stops on the InterCity services will increase the journey times for the vast majority of passengers who will continue to want to travel to or via Central London."

Paddington is not in central London—a point which should not escape us in these debates and which was made by the hon. Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) when he spoke of the disturbance that 6 million passengers will cause the city of Westminster and in and around Paddington station.

The letter continued:

"An interchange at Paddington will mean that every InterCity train connects with a Heathrow Express service which will be waiting in the platform and the passengers can change platforms without having to go up and down steps. South Wales will thus have better access to Heathrow than other regions, passengers from which will have to cross London via the Underground."

There is nothing like BR management for stating the obvious, but it does not appear to be particularly convenient to pass the eventual destination of a good many passengers and to go on to the centre of London, only for those passengers to have to reverse 10 miles along the route over which they have already travelled.

The letter concluded:

"I hope this helps to allay any concerns you may have had over the effect of the Bill on services from South Wales."

It does not allay any concerns. Indeed, when one reads such gobbledegook from rail management, it arouses even more concern among those of us who are worried about the future of that once great industry.

The same gentleman wrote to me about the same topic because, like my hon. Friends, I raised the issue of a west-facing link. In his letter, Mr. Beynon said:

"Thirdly, with regard to a west facing link, it would be wrong to say that BAA and BR do not want it. We have several ideas about how this could be achieved which would not be precluded by the initial link. Again as you pointed out, through services to the west cannot take place until the Western Region Main Line is fully electrified."

As far as I am aware, I did not point that out, but no matter. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West reminded us during the debate on the carry-over motion, the Minister of State said that electrification as far as Reading of an east-west crossrail service was an integral part of the scheme, and we are grateful for that. British Rail's fears about providing a west-facing link without electrification had been eased, if not nullified, by the Minister's statement a month or so ago.

Hon. Members can see no reason why such a west-facing link cannot be provided. I am sure that my hon. Friends from Welsh constituencies, some of whom have spoken on the Bill, will continue to advocate the provision both during and after the Committee stage. I hope that the Under-Secretary will consider the depth of feeling on both sides of the House about this scheme.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Unfortunately, I was not here for the earlier part of the debate. My hon. Friend may recall that, in the debate on the carry-over motion, the issue of access from south Wales was emphasised and we pointed out the considerable potential for bringing passengers from Birmingham and the north-west of England into Heathrow via Reading.

Mr. Snape: I said earlier that an estimated 5 million passengers were carried by the existing coach links from Woking and Reading to Heathrow airport. I put that point to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who sponsors the Bill, to show the additional revenue that the transfer of those passengers from the coach link to a through rail service would provide for the Bill's promoters, including British Rail. I very much agree with my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will the hon. Gentleman also emphasise the necessity of getting those 5 million passengers who currently come by car or coach off the west London roads, where they are an absolute menace?

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman steals my next point, but I do not complain about that. The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington lucidly advocated the case for an integrated transport system. The problem is that, where such a provision is needed, it is rarely made. Despite the words of the new Secretary of State for Transport on taking office, road and rail schemes are not judged by using the same criteria. The Government intend to widen the M25—unaccountably, in the view of many of us—which will merely ensure even more traffic jams and four congested lanes——

Mr. Dicks: An even bigger car park.

Mr. Snape: —an even bigger car park, as the hon. Gentleman says. Where extra demand exists for the road network, extra provision is made by extending it; where extra rail demand exists, either it is not met or Ministers come out with the advice to British Rail that it should use —in the immortal phrase uttered by the Department of Transport—the "mechanism of the market" to damp down demand. For those of us who speak a more lucid form of English, that means that fares are increased, passengers are forced off the trains on to the road and another lane is built on the M25 to cater for the extra demand generated by using that beloved "mechanism of the market", to which the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington takes violent and welcome exception.

Mr. Dicks *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. He cannot call for an integrated transport system and also embrace the mechanism of the market, intellectual though he might be. I think that he will accept that there is a conflict.

Mr. Dicks *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head again.

I had better not tempt him further.

We have also debated the issue of an exit to the south and the former Southern railway. If its proposals were accepted in Committee, the Hounslow petition would require the Bill's promoters to provide three partial step-plate junctions in the proposed tunnel for the express rail system beneath Heathrow to enable the tunnel to be joined to a link between Heathrow and the Southern railway west of Feltham. The estimate is that the cost of

[Mr. Snape]

those three step-plate junctions, if they were made during the express rail construction, would be about £3 million. To build the junctions breaking into the tunnel after construction of the express link would involve estimated expenditure of £21 million.

Of course, construction after the rail link was open would mean that the Heathrow express service would need to be stopped for about a year, with a loss in fare revenue alone of £35 million. It appears that, unless provision is made for that southern link to be provided at the outset, there will be little opportunity—other than a very expensive one—for it to be constructed once the express link is completed and gets under way.

I commend to the Under-Secretary the Colin Buchanan report "Additional Public Transport in South West London", figure 3.3 of which shows the loop connection to the former Southern railway which would enable eight trains an hour to serve the Heathrow express rail stations from the south without any restriction on capacity from Paddington. The eight trains an hour from the south would serve the London boroughs of Richmond, Hounslow, Sutton, Merton and Kingston upon Thames in an orbital service from Croydon to Heathrow, via Streatham, Wimbledon, Kingston, Twickenham and Feltham. We and, perhaps more important, the local authorities concerned believe that that service would make an important contribution to resolving the massive problems of road traffic congestion in south-west London. The Heathrow-Croydon orbital service would also provide a rail service between Heathrow and Gatwick.

I commend to Ministers the Labour party's transport proposals for the channel tunnel scheme—where we propose a rail ring around London—of which these proposals would form an integral part. Again, there is nothing particularly revolutionary in such proposals. They have long been accepted for the road network. Indeed, a rail ring is exactly what the French are providing around Paris to cater for the extra traffic that the channel tunnel links will generate. Of course, the French plan these matters; they are not obsessed with road building as the Department of Transport has been throughout its long and largely shallow history.

The scheme that I outlined will cost less than £200 million, according to Colin Buchanan's study—the price of a few hundred yards of road in docklands. We are talking not about docklands but about a scheme that could benefit not only passengers to and from Heathrow but rail passengers throughout the United Kingdom and, once the channel tunnel opens, rail passengers throughout western Europe.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will take those points on board and will give an undertaking that, in Committee, the proposals will be studied seriously. If they are not carried out at the first construction stages, they are unlikely to be carried out at all. The Labour party fears a re-run of the docklands light railway saga, when a palpably inadequate system was installed and now has to be improved, at enormous public expense. For goodness' sake, let us get it right on this occasion.

History does not fill us full of enthusiasm or optimism on these matters. We do not judge road and rail schemes by similar criteria. At present, there are hundreds of road schemes that, under the existing criteria used by the Department, can be justified, but which, as all of us in the House know, will never be built because of their environmental impact and because of the uproar that they would cause among the public. Yet, at the same time, we have rail schemes that, under the existing criteria laid down by the Department, could be built, but which cannot be justified. Something is wrong; that something is a lack of transport policy.

There has been some unanimity in the debate. Hon. Members of all parties acknowledge that transport policy is missing from the Bill. We must get it right this time. If the Under-Secretary and the Minister for Public Transport get it wrong, it will be an expensive mistake for which the rest of us, in due course, will have to pay.

8.40 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate all the hon. Members who have taken part in this good debate, although the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) spread the debate somewhat and went into his usual overdrive about policy. He made the commitment that he would spend £200 million, which will no doubt be wholly rejected by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Snape: I want to make a point that will be important for the Minister's education when he returns to opposition, as he will after the next election. The proposals have been costed and approved, and they are part of our national transport policy, which is supported by the Minister's hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks); it is called planning.

Mr. McLoughlin: That is an interesting diversion, but I will not go down that route. I have never been in opposition in this place. I hope that the hon. Gentleman stays in his place for a considerable time to come.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on the able way in which he raised the matter, which has stood around and been talked about for so long. He did a remarkable job and he carried most of the House with him when he dealt with each point.

The Government fully support the principle of the Bill. The prospect of an express rail link between London and Europe's busiest airport is exciting, because it will help to ensure that Heathrow continues to be a major interchange for world and for European travel. The fact that this is essentially a private sector project, with the British Airports Authority putting up 80 per cent. of the cost and bearing the majority of the risk, shows that the private sector can play a significant role in the new transport project.

Most hon. Members are in favour of the principle of the link, but there are some reservations which have been raised today. I am sure that the objections raised by the various petitioners will be examined fully in Committee. I understand that the promoters are in discussion with many of the petitioners to see whether their concerns can be dealt with satisfactorily before then.

Concern has been expressed on two points. The first was the environmental impact of the scheme, which my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) raised. The second point was the possibility of the provision of a west-facing link being included in the Bill. Officials at the Department are currently researching

the setting of standards for noise levels for new railways in line with those that are already applied to new highways. British Rail is responsible for making arrangements for noise insulation and is currently engaged in research aimed at reducing noise and vibration from trains.

Hon. Members have referred to the noise from the intensified use of existing railways. I hope that we can announce a decision on compensation early next year. Both the BAA and British Rail are committed to ensuring that the environmental consequences of the proposed link are minimised and that the building and operation of the link are as unobtrusive as possible. I have no doubt that their detailed plans will be scrutinised carefully in Committee.

The west-facing link has many proponents and the suggestion for such a link was echoed by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). He referred to the report of the National Economic Development Office entitled "On the Right Track to Heathrow Airport". It argued the need to connect Heathrow more effectively with west and south Wales. That is not the only proposal to enhance the service. There is also a proposal for a link to the southern region track into Waterloo and there are calls for the crossrail train to serve Heathrow to provide a direct service to Essex.

However, all the potential developments will come to nothing if the basic priority of an express Heathrow-Paddington link is not achieved. The Bill will provide the foundations on which other new services can be built. The important issue is to get the Bill through, in the knowledge that nothing in it precludes further development in the longer term. I know that the promoters are discussing with Hounslow borough council ways in which the potential for a southern region link can be preserved. I am sure that an appropriate solution can be found.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): The Minister has referred to the foundations. It seems strange to build the foundation before we decide how to construct the building. Does not the Minister intend to respond to hon. Members of all parties who have said that the Bill proposes a piecemeal development, which does not consider the eventual shape of the railways? In Wales, we are very concerned about that. The burgeoning economy of south Wales must be served by what is our main airport. Has that been taken into account? The Minister has talked about foundations, but he has not reacted to the debate.

Mr. McLoughlin: I thought that I had made the point clear. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges that the fact that the economy of south Wales has boomed during the past few years under this Government is to be welcomed. However, that has brought fresh problems and requires further infrastructure. My point was that the Bill will not preclude further development. Without the line, there will be no opportunity for such development. The Committee will be able to look at the whole question and it can make recommendations. I have no doubt that there will be consultations at that time. If the BAA can come to an accommodation with other groups or if fresh developments are merited, there may be changes. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman feels that I did not make that point. I think that he was engaged in a conversation when I referred directly to the point made by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, so he may not have heard me make that point.

The prospects for the crossrail service to Heathrow will be examined, but the immediate priority is for a high-quality link to London, which is what the Bill provides and what the Government support. I hope that the Bill can move through its remaining stages successfully and as swiftly as possible.

8.47 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am inclined to support the Bill. It seems plain common sense that there should be a fast rail connection between central London and Heathrow. The present rail link by underground, the Piccadilly line, is hopelessly inadequate. It stops 15 or 20 times between central London and Heathrow; it stops every two or three minutes. Contrasted with that, a 16-minute service from Paddington to Heathrow will be excellent.

One factor which appeals to me is the relief it would bring to traffic on the A4, the Cromwell road in west London. That is one of London's main arterial roads not only to the western side of London, but beyond, and to the whole of the west and south-west of England and to Wales. That is one of London's most main roads.

When I intervened earlier, I did not have the figures to hand of the estimated impact on that traffic of constructing the Paddington-to-Heathrow rail link. Since then, I have been informed that it would affect the number of vehicles on Cromwell road by some 3,000 per day—about 2,000 taxis and about 1,000 cars per day. That is not a vast proportion, but it is not insignificant, and it would benefit all those people who live in west and south-west London and beyond, including my constituents who have to get in and out of London along the Cromwell road.

The one thing that would stand in the way of my support for the Bill is the thought that it was linked in any way to the concept of a fifth terminal at Heathrow, as was half-implied by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). I hope that he will not mind if I say that I regard him as one of my best friends. I hope that, when my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) replies to the debate, if he manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he can assure me categorically that there is no such plan and that the proposal to construct the railway from Paddington to Heathrow stands on its own. I would require that undertaking from him before deciding whether to support the Bill.

I warmly support what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) said about the need for a subsequent rail link into Heathrow from Feltham, Twickenham, Richmond and beyond. As the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape), said, that is supported by five south London boroughs, and I believe that it would be warmly welcomed. I hope that we can have a clear assurance that what is decided by the House tonight and what is anticipated in Committee would not stand in the way of that.

I have the utmost sympathy with the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who said that he did not want people from south Wales going to Heathrow to have to travel into Paddington and then go back to Heathrow. We can all sympathise with that. I went to Cardiff by rail last month. I live about five or six miles from Heathrow airport. I drove my car to Reading and took an excellent

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

fast train from Reading to Cardiff. It is a first-class service. I can understand how people from south Wales would feel about having to go all the way into Paddington and back again. However, a much larger number of people want to travel from Cardiff, Bristol, Reading or Swindon all the way into London. There are more people from those places who would want to travel into London than would want to go to Heathrow on any one day. A stop at Hayes and Harlington would hold up all those people.

I stand to be corrected by a railway expert, but I believe that a one-minute stop, to which is added the time for slowing down and speeding up before and after Hayes and Harlington, would add between eight and 12 minutes to the journey. The same would apply coming out from Paddington to Heathrow. It would add about four minutes to the 16-minute journey, making it 20 minutes. That would affect a much larger number of people wanting to travel from Paddington to Heathrow. One would want to see the figures for the number of people travelling from Cardiff and the other places I have mentioned to Heathrow each day so as to weigh up the benefit to them against the loss in time to what I believe would be a larger number of people.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman is not over-enthusiastic about a fifth terminal at Heathrow. Will he accept that, at present, much of the pressure on Heathrow is caused by the large number of people who arrive on flights from other parts of England and Wales to change at Heathrow? If we had the western link, many of those people would find it easier to come by rail to Heathrow, and there would not be as much pressure for the extra terminal.

Mr. Jessel: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument, but if the train were to stop at Hayes and Harlington for a change to Heathrow, it would already be slowing down and it would only take about another five or seven minutes to get to Paddington. The benefit to the people he described is marginal, and it would have to be set against a disbenefit to a large number of people caused by a stop in both directions at Hayes and Harlington station. I suspect that, if one were to see the figures for the number of people involved in all those categories, the loss in terms of human time would be greater than the gain.

I hope that that point will not be allowed to stand in the way of the progress of what I believe would be a generally beneficial Bill. Many of those from Cardiff and other parts of the country can now fly direct to certain continental destinations, and that will increase as time goes on. It could be that the proportion of those wanting to travel from places such as Cardiff and Bristol to Heathrow will not increase as fast as the number who want to travel from central London to Heathrow, because of the increasing number of flights from provincial airports to continental destinations.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me. As long as my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South can give me the assurances I seek, I shall not oppose the Bill.

8.56 pm

Mr. Thorne *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) have the leave of the House to speak again? It seems that he does.

Mr. Thorne: This has been an extremely helpful and constructive debate. Hon. Members have made constructive points and I am sure that the promoters will have listened carefully to everything that has been said. I reiterate that it is their wish to make a profitable and successful enterprise of this project and anything that can be done to enhance its output will be considered seriously.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) talked about the present proposal having been planned in isolation. It was the result of a successful competitive bid by BAA and British Rail from which the scheme has evolved. It was one of a number considered at the time and, therefore, was not part of an overall strategy. We should make that point clear. I welcome what the hon. Member for Cardiff, West and other hon. Members said about this being a step forward, but it would be wrong to blame the sponsors for not incorporating it in a larger network.

Of course, Heathrow is a national airport. This is not a local matter and I am sure that BAA in particular would not dream of suggesting otherwise. The hon. Member for Cardiff, West will be pleased to hear that the NEDC report to which he referred has been welcomed by Sir John Egan, the chief executive of BAA. That and what it implies augurs well for the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) rightly voiced the fears of his constituents about additional traffic in their area. I fully take on board what he said. The promoters wish to do everything possible to mitigate that. The matter is not entirely in their hands. As my hon. Friend knows, several other bodies are involved—including English Heritage—and their permission must be obtained on certain aspects. However, I am sure that the crossrail link will be helpful to his constituents. We can expect that a proper and detailed plan for Paddington station will be incorporated in the near future.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground) made a strong case for keeping open the option of a link to the south. I gave an assurance earlier that the matter was under active consideration. Although the instruction to the Committee was not accepted by Mr. Speaker, I am sure that a future link to the south will be considered carefully by both the Opposed Private Bill Committee and the House.

My hon. and learned Friend said that it would be enormously more expensive to incorporate the work on a southern link at a later date. As he said, the work could be done at a tenth of the price in the planning for this link. That will most certainly be taken into account. But cost is relevant because the railway must be self-financing. It would be wrong to give a commitment that, regardless of cost, the items referred to will be incorporated. That would have an adverse effect on the overall cost to the passengers who will use the line. It would discourage people from using it, which in turn would lead to more congestion on the roads. Such matters must be delicately balanced and we must watch them carefully.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) made a helpful speech. He welcomed the project and gave it his good wishes. He made an important point when he congratulated the promoters on listening so carefully to what people were saying. That was certainly my experience, too. They went out of their way to listen to everyone involved in the Bill. They have always listened and they are still open to suggestions. If every sponsor of a private Bill listened as carefully as they have done, private Bills would go through the House more speedily.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said that it was necessary to incorporate the railway as part of a larger network. He congratulated the promoters on bringing forward the scheme at this stage and I share his view.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) mentioned the need for strategic planning and a link from the west. We all hope that demand will show that there is a need for a service from the west. It might be helpful to mention the origin of the people who use Heathrow. According to a survey, central London provides just over 32 per cent. of Heathrow passengers. Outer London provides just over 19 per cent., the south-east provides just over 31 per cent., the south-west provides almost six per cent., East Anglia provides over 2·5 per cent., the midlands provide almost 4·5 per cent., the north provides 2·5 per cent., Scotland provides 0·5 per cent. and Wales provides just over 1·5 per cent. Those figures show that the plan to initiate the project as quickly as possible is the natural and most sensible course of action.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East quoted figures for people who come to Heathrow by coach. If those figures accurately indicate that demand will grow, I am sure that we shall soon have a connection to the west. It should come soon after the electrification of that part of the railway network. We can look forward to that.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the need for stepped junctions. That must be fully and properly investigated. Clearly, one would not want the whole project to be closed for 12 months purely and simply because stepped junctions had not been provided at a reasonable cost earlier in the project. That will be carefully considered.

The Minister made a helpful speech. He knows as much as I do about the project. I am sure that the Government are as anxious as everyone else that the proposals be quickly and speedily introduced.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) asked for an assurance that the project is not dependent on the construction of a fifth terminal at Healthrow. I am happy to give him that assurance. There is no requirement to build a fifth terminal to make the project viable. The project can stand on its own feet on the basis of existing demand.

I have also been asked separately by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) to respond to a request that he previously made for a stop at Acton, for the benefit of Heathrow staff, many of whom live in his constituency. I looked into the matter some months ago and was disappointed to find that the possibility of using alternative rolling stock to convey staff to and from Acton and Heathrow at the changeover duty period could not be implemented because the available rolling stock did not comply with modern safety standards for carriages going in tunnels. Because of that unfortunate fact, that stop cannot be implemented now. I hope that such a facility will be provided in future. It certainly cannot be provided when, as I hope, the project is opened for business in 1995.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed.

Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill

[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—
Motion made, and Question proposed.

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred—

(a) in connection with the formation of any company formed with a view to, or for any purpose of, the carrying on of activities designated under the Act or with the operation of any such company wholly owned by the Secretary of State; or

(b) in assuming responsibility for any liabilities (whether of such a company or any other company which is or has been a contractor) which are liabilities arising out of the carrying on of activities so designated or liabilities to or in respect of persons employed or formerly employed in or in connection with the carrying on of such activities.—*[Kenneth Carlisle.]*

9.5 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): It is important that we do not let this motion go through on the nod. The whole history of the House of Commons is based on the demands of commoners to have the right to some control over expenditure. It is sad that, in recent years, hon. Members have tended to take less and less interest in money resolutions, and how money is spent.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Not me.

Mr. Bennett: I fully acknowledge that my hon. Friend has made a habit of speaking on money resolutions, and I certainly commend him for it.

I must apologise to the House for not having been here to listen to the earlier debate. I was serving on the Standing Committee on the Criminal Justice Bill. It is possible that some of the questions on expenditure that I wish to ask were answered previously, and tomorrow I shall read with interest the debate in *Hansard*, but I hope that the Minister will bear with me and at least attempt to answer some of my questions.

How much are the Government including in their estimates to cover nuclear safety? In particular, what will they include to cover compensation for workers who suffer from radiation? How much extra will be spent on the national health service for treating those patients? Will the Government make available to the general public the information about what is happening to people who work in the new establishment?

Recently, I tabled questions about the levels of radiation experienced by workers at naval dockyards. I am pleased that at long last the Government have adopted a more open approach to such matters and have started to publish the levels of radiation. That helps to alleviate some fears, although when one or two workers see the levels of dosage from which they have suffered and the implications that that has, particularly now that the international standards——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I did not quite catch where the hon. Gentleman was asking us to look at levels of radiation.

Mr. Bennett: It is for the workers who will be employed in the manufacture of the warheads. I was drawing a comparison with the problems suffered in the naval dockyards. I said that I was pleased that the Government were starting to publish that information.

After having discovered that some workers in the dockyard who were directly employed by the Government were getting the figures, I was alarmed to discover when I asked about workers employed by Rolls-Royce——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see how these matters relate to the money resolution.

Mr. Bennett: I started by asking how much this would cost. I was describing what happened in the naval dockyards, where the Government were prepared to give information for their workers, but refused to do so for Rolls-Royce workers.

The measure will privatise the work being done at Aldermaston. I want to be sure that when we question the Government about the possible levels of radiation suffered by people working on the warheads, we shall not be told that that information, and the costs associated with it, cannot be made available to us.

Shall we be given the full costs of the Trident programme and all the implications involved in that development? We are constantly given the figure——

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Has the hon. Gentleman read the Bill? If not, I have a spare copy with me that he could have. I ask because the issues that he is raising have nothing to do with the Bill. As he was not present for the Second Reading debate, when we had an informed discussion, I thought that he might not have read the measure, and I hoped that he would make his remarks relevant to it.

Mr. Bennett: I was making pertinent comments about the costs involved. I appreciate the Government's enthusiasm for covering up the sort of issues that I am raising. I should have thought that the Government would be prepared to put forward all the details about the costs involved in those issues. The Government should be open in these matters. After all, the Minister moved the resolution formally, as though he did not think there was a need to talk about costs and similar issues. Had he been prepared to make an opening speech which included all the cost details, there might have been no need for me to raise these issues. I shall listen with interest to his reply to the debate.

I am anxious to know when the House will be given the full costings of the Trident programme. We are still being given round figures, but I gather that there are major problems with that programme. The Government leave out crucial bits of information from the figures that they give. In the entire nuclear area, we have not been given proper costings. When we raise issues in due course, we discover that whole areas of expenditure have not been taken into account. If the Minister assures me that all the costs, including the implied costs, of the measure have been taken into account, I shall not pursue the matter further.

It is interesting, as an example, to consider what happened with the development of Polaris submarines. We were given the costs of the development, but were not told how much it would cost to decommission the nuclear reactors, mainly because the Government did not know how the work would be done. I want an assurance that, in passing tonight's measure, we are not committing

ourselves to hidden costs about dismantling, decommissioning and so on at the end of the lifetime of the facilities——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I find it difficult to understand how the hon. Member is relating his remarks to the motion or the substance of the Bill.

Mr. Bennett: I was using Polaris as an example of the way in which the Government give the supposed costs, and later we find substantial items of cost left out. It seems reasonable for me to ask, following what happened with Polaris——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It would have helped had the hon. Member been present for the Second Reading debate.

Mr. Bennett: As I explained, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was in Committee. It would have been impossible for me to be up there and down here at the same time, especially as I was responsible for moving amendments in Committee. I suggest that it is reasonable, therefore, for me to put questions to the Minister now.

I was saying in passing that the Government had not provided the costs of decommissioning Polaris submarines. I want to make sure that we know the full costs, including what will be involved in decommissioning, of the facilities which are the subject of the Bill. Will the Government bear the costs, or will they be borne by those running the facility? These are important questions because considerable problems arise when decommissioning facilities of this type. It is not something one can do easily, but will have a cost well into the future. Therefore, all that I am asking the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I was in the Chair for most of the debate on Second Reading when the Minister described the Bill's purpose and other hon. Members commented on it. The Bill does not seem to contain anything related to decommissioning of any kind.

Mr. Bennett: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are making the point that I am trying to establish. A full account of the costs of those measures must be given to the House. The Government say that they are transferring something from a public to a private provision, which will create a problem in the future when we have to clear up the mess. As long as it was a public provision, we should have been told what those costs were in the money resolution, but now the position is changing and the matter ceases to be a Government provision and becomes a half-private one. I suspect that the private undertaking will make profits out of the proposal and the taxpayer will be left with the cost of clearing up the mess.

If you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, believe that anyone involved in any sort of nuclear activity will not face future costs, I would concede that I was making a false point. But I suggest that it is a worry because there will be future costs. I want an assurance from the Minister that he will tell the House the cost to the taxpayer of clearing up those facilities. The sooner we can get rid of such facilities and stop needing to use them the better, but they will then have to be cleared up, which will involve expenditure. The private contractor will no longer make profits out of the facility, so will be reluctant to pay for the clearing-up costs. I am simply asking what the cost will be of decommissioning the facility. If the Minister will tell me, I shall happily give way; if not, I shall wait until the end of the debate to see whether he will give us those answers.

During the past 20 years there has been a major nuclear programme in this country in both civil and military facilities, and the House of Commons has not been given the real cost of that programme—that is the problem. Every time one asks for answers to those questions, Ministers want to keep quiet. They do not want to talk about things that are either military secrets or something that they want to hide away. I simply want the Minister to give a clear undertaking now on what the full costs of the measure are likely to be, what the costs will be of making the district safe and the medical costs for people who work there, particularly as that plant has not had the best of records in terms of its design and the way in which it is being run. It has left people with considerable worries. I shall now listen with considerable interest to what the Minister has to say.

9.18 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I heard only the two winding-up speeches because I was also in Committee from 4.15 pm. I was in the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which I chair, and the Select Committee on Members' Interests, of which I am a member. That shows the number of activities that we have to undertake in the House if we are to carry out our job. It also shows that the notion that we can all break off at 5 pm and go home for tea is ludicrous. Today has demonstrated the absurdity of that notion, because we have much to deal with.

There are two paragraphs to the money resolution. In paragraph (a) we are about to authorise the expenditure by the Secretary of State for the formation of a company to carry out the designated activities in the Bill. That seems fair enough, covering as it does the cost of share issues, registration at Companies House, and so on. I suspect that it would involve a relatively small sum of money—but no doubt the Minister will illuminate that aspect when he replies. However, the resolution also authorises the Secretary of State to pay for the operation of any such company, which is rather different. The authority to finance the operation of a company carrying out designated activities could involve a large sum of money.

Clause 1(2) of the Bill refers to designated activities as follows:

> "The activities that may be designated under subsection (1) above are any activities connected with the development, production or maintenance of nuclear devices or with research into such devices or their effects; and the premises that may be so designated are those which, when this Act comes into force, form part of the undertaking carried on by the Secretary of State and known as the Atomic Weapons Establishment."

In other words, the operation of that establishment will be authorised by the money resolution. We should like to know what sort of annual sum the Secretary of State has in mind.

If the activities are undertaken by a private company, as presumably will be the case, will that company's returns be included as part of the annual defence estimates? Clearly its work will be connected with the Ministry of Defence, and the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement is part of that establishment. It will be interesting to know whether right hon. and hon. Members will have to look up a private company's annual return to obtain figures of defence expenditure.

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

Will the company be one stage removed from Parliament, or will right hon. and hon. Members, by tabling parliamentary questions, be able to obtain information about it? Or will the Minister say, "That matter is for the company"? That ruse is often used by the Government. Under the resolution, the Secretary of State will be able to form a company, draw moneys to do that, and then finance its whole operation. It is therefore important that we receive from the Minister an assurance that financial or other questions about the company asked in Parliament will be answerable by the Minister, and that he will not shield himself behind the company's separateness.

The second paragraph of the resolution gives the Secretary of State responsibility

"for any liabilities (whether of such a company"—

that is, a company formed by the Secretary of State—

"or any other company which is or has been a contractor) which are liabilities arising out of the carrying on of activities so designated".

Under clause 1(2), the Secretary of State is given an open cheque in assuming responsibilities for the company in operation, and for any liabilities arising, and for any other company that is or has been a contractor. That is a wide range of potential liabilities.

The trade union brief on the Bill includes details of Government-owned, contractor-operated arrangements in the United States. It states:

"Thus, at the Rocky Flats site near Denver, one of the three main US nuclear weapons facilities, 62 lbs of plutonium have been discovered in the air ducts of the plant, which has had to be shut down. We have provided a detailed dossier of evidence to the Defence Committee on the situation in the United States. At the very least, the Government should conduct a full and open study of the US experience before proceeding further."

I do not accept that Government control over a private contractor is as great as Government control over a directly operated Government Department. Therefore, safety risks could increase. Does the resolution mean that the Secretary of State can assume liability when a company is at fault in what everybody accepts is a potentially extremely hazardous process? That seems to be the implication of the money resolution.

Suppose, in this wonderful world of enterprise culture from which the Minister is attempting to persuade the House that we shall benefit a company—I suspect that this is what the resolution is about—tenders for some work at a reduced cost which it cannot then carry out because it has made a miscalculation, which happens all the time, and it goes into liquidation. Is the Secretary of State guaranteeing to those companies which tender for work that he can bail them out of any designated activity? That is important because it warps the whole tendering procedure. A company will know that it has a guarantee, provided by the Government through the resolution. Safety is an important aspect.

Another point made in the excellent brief provided by a combination of trade unions is that safety is prejudiced where it is divided between contractors and the Ministry of Defence. That is obviously the case because countermanding instructions, different standards and similar sets of circumstances can create the potential for greater hazard. At the end of the day, it looks as though the taxpayer, through the Secretary of State, will be picking up the bill.

As it is clear that the designated activities which the money resolution specifically covers are important, it is pretty poor—I doubt whether this was mentioned in the previous debate—that the wide power of designation accorded to the Secretary of State under clause 1 is given by a negative procedure order. We are talking about an inherently hazardous procedure which produces weapons that can exterminate millions of people and the financing of those designated activities should be by means of an affirmative instrument rather than a negative procedure instrument.

The Minister was once a Whip and he has sat for many hours listening to and taking part in debates about the amount of time allocated to business in the House. That is why I started by talking about those people who think that the House of Commons can shut up and go home for tea at 5 o'clock because it is more comfortable and cosy that way. We do not have enough time to debate all the things that we should in the House. Affirmative resolutions should be the preferred system so that there is a requirement for a resolution of the House before authority is given to the Secretary of State, particularly on an important matter such as this.

Clause 3(2) states:

"The Secretary of State may by order repeal or amend any provision of the Schedule to this Act; but this power shall not be exercised so as to extend the application of any privilege or immunity which is for the time being provided for by that Schedule."

I welcome that important reservation. Paragraph 9(2) of the schedule states:

"The power of the Secretary of State under section 48(4) of that Act (Crown exemptions) shall include power, exercisable in the interests of the safety of the State, to provide for exemption, in relation to designated premises or activities carried on by a contractor at such premises, from all or any of the relevant statutory provisions within the meaning of Part I of that Act."

That refers to the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974.

We are discussing a money resolution that gives the Secretary of State power to meet all the costs of any contracting companies operating under the designation procedure. If the Secretary of State—we should like to know his reasons—removes the relevant section of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act and problems such as explosions or injuries arise, will the increased costs be guaranteed to the companies if they arise out of action under the schedule and come under the category of

"the interests of the safety of the State",

whatever that means?

This is an all-embracing resolution. I shall not quibble with the end of paragraph (b), which deals with

"liabilities to or in respect of persons employed or formerly employed in or in connection with the carrying on of such activities."

That is welcome. There is no reason why people should suffer because of the Government's ideological commitment. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) asked about the pensions which the Government will provide. I take it that this part of the financial resolution will cover pensions, but the Minister was evasive about whether new employees would have the same rights. He said that they had the right to enter a pension scheme, but I should like a little more detail.

If we carry out, as I hope we will, the terms of the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty, clause 6

of which obliges us to get rid of nuclear weapons—the change in circumstances in eastern Europe means that the Government can no longer point to the red menace in the east as the reason for purchasing Trident and for the deployment of Polaris, which is not deployed anyway because it is defective—does the last part of the resolution provide for a change from the designated operations and activities listed in the resolution to allow the Secretary of State to start on the momentous expenditure involved in changing from weapons of mass extermination and war to peaceful purposes? If the answer is yes, this will be one of the best financial resolutions that we have ever passed. If not, and if it is only about more warheads and more potential death and destruction, we should have to look at it very critically indeed.

9.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): For many years I wondered when I would be on the receiving end of a speech by the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on a money resolution. I have listened to him for many hours late at night wishing that his speeches would come to an end. So tonight is a special occasion and I am delighted to see him in his place.

I felt that the debate on the money resolution went rather wide. We had a wide-ranging debate on Second Reading on the principle of the Bill and on its details. It is important that, in my reply, I am relevant to the money resolution, which refers to the narrow aims of the Bill to transfer the work force at the atomic weapons establishment from the civil service into a separate company, which will be taken over by the contractor, and will then be the employer.

The money resolution authorises the payment, out of money provided by Parliament, of certain expenses which might be incurred by the Secretary of State, in connection with the introduction of contractor operation at the atomic weapons establishment. Those expenses include the costs involved in forming the company to which I referred, which will act as the employer of all AWE staff, and in operating the company until it is transferred to the ownership of the contractor who will operate the establishment.

I cannot give a precise forecast of the costs at this stage, but I can say with complete confidence that they will be small. The company will have no assets other than its staff and will be similar to the employing companies set up in 1987 at the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth. In that case, the cost of setting up the employing companies was just over £50,000 each. However, almost all of that was subsequently recovered.

The resolution also authorises payment of expenses that might arise if the Secretary of State takes back responsibility for the employing company after it has been transferred to a contractor. There are two situations in which that might arise. First, should the operating contract at AWE change hands at some time in the future, the staff and therefore the employing company would have to be transferred to the new contractor. In that event, it is possible that the company would be taken back by the Secretary of State for a brief period, before being acquired by the new contractor. However, it is unlikely that that would involve significant costs to the Secretary of State.

Also, it is conceivable that the Secretary of State might wish to take back control of AWE, and thus of the employing company, in an emergency. The Secretary of State would then be responsible for the liabilities of the company—for example, the salaries of the AWE work force. I must stress that we do not consider it likely that such an eventuality would occur, but it is prudent to make provision just in case.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: What will be the position of the company if, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) suggested, the demand for warheads for Trident suddenly ceased? Is there any requirement in the money resolution for compensation to the contractor, or does the contractor stand at risk?

Mr. Carlisle: I was coming to that at the end of my remarks. The hon. Member for Bradford, South mentioned one or two technical matters about the company. I should like to consider what he said and write to him, as I think that that would be the best way to give him the correct answer, and I should like to do so.

The hon. Members for Bradford, South and for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) asked what we would do if we decided not to have a nuclear deterrent. The Government feel that the best security for our country is to retain a nuclear deterrent. Trident is an important part of that, and the AWE is an essential ingredient of Trident.

I had been led to believe—I was surprised by it—by the speech of the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman that the Opposition also, for some reason, latterly believe in a nuclear deterrent. I know that the hon. Members for Bradford, South and for Denton and Reddish are loyal members of the Labour party. In Committee it would be interesting to know of their views on this matter, because it is one of the aspects that we shall concentrate on. Clearly, if the Opposition have any doubt about the nuclear deterrent, they ought to tell the several thousand employees at AWE that their jobs are truly at risk. In that case, there would be a considerable cost to the nation.

Mr. Cryer: This is why I raised the possibility of using people's skills for peaceful purposes. I believe that the Minister really has a soft spot for the 139 non-nuclear nations that signed the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Surely the Government cannot deny the possibility that, at some stage in the not-too-distant future, there may be a need to keep the jobs concerned, because the world rejects the deployment of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sure that the Minister has a soft spot for the rules of order governing a money resolution.

Mr. Carlisle: I certainly have—and I also have an extremely strong spot for the continued use of nuclear deterrence in an uncertain world.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister accept that normal commercial prudence should take into account the possibility that we shall not need those deterrents? I should have thought that the Minister would welcome such a state of affairs, however it is achieved. He should therefore be able to tell us what would be the cost of changing the contract in regard to the establishment if we no longer needed to make the nuclear warheads. Although the Minister would still want a nuclear deterrent, I suggest

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

that there are other ways of providing it than Trident, which may well prove too costly even for the present Government.

Mr. Carlisle: That, too, is rather outside the scope of the Bill. I can only say that we believe in the nuclear deterrent: we feel that, in an uncertain world, it is a wise defence. It is interesting to note the divergence in defence policy in the Labour party; we shall have to watch that.

We predict that the sum required to support the Bill will not be large. I therefore urge the House to support the resolution.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses of the Secretary of State incurred—

(a) in connection with the formation of any company formed with a view to, or for any purpose of, the carrying on of activities designated under the Act or with the operation of any such company wholly owned by the Secretary of State; or

(b) in assuming responsibility for any liabilities (whether of such a company or any other company which is or has been a contractor) which are liabilities arising out of the carrying on of activities so designated or liabilities to or in respect of persons employed or formerly employed in or in connection with the carrying on of such activities.

European Community (Research and Development)

9.42 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I beg to move.

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7053/90 relating to a programme for research and technological development in the field of Human Capital and Mobility; endorses the Government's view that this European Community initiative will present an appropriate means of providing assistance to the mobility of scientists, hence enhancing the development of European science and Europe's industrial competitiveness; and supports the Government's policy of pursuing clear scientific and managerial objectives within the programme to promote effective delivery of the specific training and mobility measures proposed.

I welcome the opportunity to debate this important programme, which has several unusual features. The Government certainly recognise its importance to the scientific community of the United Kingdom, and this is a valuable opportunity for me to inform the House of the progress that is now being made in negotiations in Brussels.

First, let me explain the current state of the programme. I hope that the House will be indulgent if I venture a little into Euro-jargon. The programme known as "human capital and mobility" is a specific programme line in the Community's third framework programme for research and development for 1990 to 1994. Framework programme 3 has been agreed as a rolling programme—that is, overlapping with the one before and, we expect, the one that will follow. It has reduced the 22 programme lines in framework programme 2 to only six. At a cost of 518 million ecu—about £370 million—it is the third largest programme in the third framework.

As the explanatory memorandum explains, the human capital programme is the particular responsibility of the Department of Education and Science, and is of special significance to the five United Kingdom research councils. It follows on from three existing programmes under framework 2—SCIENCE, economic science and large facilities. Let me stress that the science programme is "horizontal"—it provides support for science in all areas of the natural sciences. Once the negotiations are more advanced, we shall be submitting a supplementary explanatory memorandum providing greater detail about the programme, as requested in the 30th report of the Select Committee on European Legislation.

The Commission's original proposal was issued on 28 April 1990. It proposed a programme entirely focused on support for research training, including the funding of 5,000 individual scientists, some through the development of networks of laboratories. I think it fair to say that this proposal caused some surprise and concern. There had been no formal process of consultation with member country representatives and the programme did not obviously continue the work and activities current under the SCIENCE, large facilities and SPES—stimulation programme for economic sciences—programmes.

We were, of course, fully aware of worries about this within the United Kingdom science community. We also knew of preliminary indications of concern on the same score from the European Parliament. In our judgment,

those problems were caused in the past by an absence of management committees for the three programmes. I shall return to management in a moment.

The explanatory memorandum to Parliament set out the Government's priorities for the programme in general terms. They were: to secure clear continuation of valued, existing activities; to achieve separation of the programme into four separate elements; to ensure visibility and transparency of scientific advice; and to ensure sound management and evaluation arrangements.

Since then, the thrust of United Kingdom activity—in co-operation with Community partners—has been to advance these priorities for inclusion in the programme.

If I could deal for a moment with procedure, the proposal comprises a brief formal element couched in legal terms with annexes that describe the content, management and funding distribution in more detail. Discussion has been taking place in recent weeks in an ad hoc group of CREST—the Scientific and Technical Research Committee—the senior body of scientific officials from member states, and this is likely to be resumed in January. Its aim has been to develop more widely acceptable proposals for the explanatory annexes. I am happy to be able to tell the House that very substantial progress has been made and that the United Kingdom has played a significant and constructive part, through the presentation of detailed suggestions for modifications to the Commission's original text. I believe that it would be useful to tell the House how the consensus is emerging.

First, there is a continuation of existing activities. The revised text, which still exists only as unofficial drafts, makes it clear that the programme should act as a natural continuation of, and extension from, the three programmes that I have mentioned. Of course, this is a new programme, so it will be important to build in a new dimension of coherence and complementarity between the various activities. The programme will therefore specify arrangements to support research training fellowships and maintain the sort of support for networks and twinnings currently achieved under the SCIENCE programme.

A consensus is emerging that there should be four elements, as the United Kingdom has proposed. There are the two that I have just mentioned and support for large facilities—primarily for access by visiting researchers, but with some scope for improving and enhancing facilities —and for a new series of European science conferences. We expect the European science Foundation in Strasbourg to be involved in these.

Achieving those objectives will depend crucially on the scientific advice. Great importance is rightly attached by the United Kingdom scientific community to the proper use of peer review in determining project support. At present, the Commission's advisers are the main source of advice in the three existing programmes under the second framework that I mentioned. However, the recent overall decision on management in Community programmes, called—I ask the House for its tolerance again—the "Comitology" decision, requires all programmes to have management committees, several different varieties of which are available.

That raises the question of how the implementation of this programme should be influenced and guided through advice from individual scientists; input from member states, including their national science organisations; and the Commission, whose legal responsibility it is to implement decisions of the Council of Ministers. There has been discussion of this quite recently in Brussels, on the basis of detailed proposals from the United Kingdom. They have yet to be endorsed, but would provide a clear framework within which the role of each of the three sources of advice and influence would be defined.

The United Kingdom and several other member countries are advocating what is known as a type 3 committee, not the type 1 committee that the Commission has advocated in its formal proposal. I could rather quickly get into a thicket of technicalities and the House might not care to follow me too deeply into it, but, briefly, a type 3 committee has a greater capacity to influence the Commission's activities, as opposed to being just advisory.

The United Kingdom has been pressing for explicit reference to the need to define objectives for the programmes that can subsequently be externally evaluated. We believe that there is considerable scope for improvement in evaluation, and that view appears to be accepted by the Commission, which has recently been making greater efforts in that direction.

The United Kingdom has clear objectives for this important programme and we have been pursuing them with energy and application. We shall have to wait two or three months for a formal decision in the Council of Ministers. If enacted in the form that we advocate, we believe that United Kingdom scientists will derive substantial benefit from the programme, as indeed they have derived substantial benefit from the three programmes that I mentioned under framework programme 2. This programme is designed to foster and to extend the process of international collaboration in European science. We believe that to be important and, subject to the changes that I have outlined, the programme can be an useful further step in the right direction.

9.50 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I listened with interest to what the Minister said about the programme and to the words that he chose to describe the Government's reaction to the initial proposals.

The Commission's proposal came very much from the personal output of Commissioner Pandolfi, a vice-president of the Commission. As the Minister said, it was issued without prior consultation and apparently without very much discussion in the Commission. The Minister said that the reaction of member Governments was one of surprise and concern.

We must consider what was originally proposed and how much it has changed. The original proposal was, I think, that some 80 per cent. of the 518 million ecu programme would be spent on fellowships, mainly post-doctoral fellowships, and that they would provide some 5,000 person years. Worked out as a proportionate share of United Kingdom contributions to European Community funding, that is about £11 million per annum from the United Kingdom.

The reaction of Governments was that the proposal was too large for the research training field, that it was too concentrated and that it proposed too big an increase in the number of fellowships. We must bear it in mind that up to 1985 the number of fellowships within European programmes was running below 50, but it increased from 150 in 1987 to 350 in 1988, so there has been a large recent increase, mainly due to the biology programme. The proposal was to increase it to 1,000 per annum.

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

The scaling back in the proposals, which are being circulated informally, means that the fellowship programme will be reduced from 80 to 50 per cent., that research networks and twinning should account for 30 per cent., the use of large facilities for 15 per cent. and European scientific conferences for 5 per cent. That will reduce the number of person years from 1,000 to 600 per year. From the soundings that I have taken, the British feeling is that the research networks should get a larger share than the 30 per cent. proposed. Matters are still not decided and a decision is not expected before April.

To see the background to this feeling, it is useful to look at what happened under the second framework programme in the fellowship programme. That was admirably evaluated by a panel under Heinrich Pfeiffer. It was a model of how to carry out evaluation. I know of no comparable evaluation of a comparable activity of a research council in the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom received some 6 per cent. of the fellowships under the second framework programme but hosted some 33 per cent. of fellows. The United Kingdom produces 25 per cent. of the doctorates in the European Community compared with 27 per cent. in Germany and 25 per cent. in France. By comparison with that 25 per cent. of the doctorates produced, we received only 6 per cent. of the post-doctoral fellowships. Germany received 12 per cent., France 20 per cent. and Portugal—which produces only 1 per cent. of the doctorates—received 10 per cent. of the fellowships.

That created the somewhat extraordinary position in which Portugal was getting more fellowships than it had doctors to receive them—fellowships amounted to some 116 per cent. of the doctorates awarded in Portugal. Greece came second, with 46 per cent. followed by Belgium with 12 per cent. and Italy, 9 per cent.; Spain, 7 per cent.; the Netherlands, 6 per cent.; France, 3 per cent.; Germany, 2 per cent.; and the United Kingdom only 1 per cent. Only 1 per cent. of British doctorates had the expectation of getting a European Community fellowship.

With the best will in the world, that seems a bit odd. There is clearly an imbalance. Why? Is the United Kingdom a favourite destination because we speak English? Is it because we have a fine scientific tradition upon which scientists in Europe are anxious to draw? It is healthy to look at the reasons given by the fellows for seeking to work in particular countries and laboratories. Only one third of the fellows said that they considered the reputation of the host laboratory as an important consideration and only one fifth felt that the reputation of the supervisor was a consideration. Eighty-four per cent. said that the main reason was their wish to live abroad and to gain international experience. Is the United Kingdom acting as a surrogate America for footloose scientists in Europe who come, perhaps not for the beer, but for something other than scientific enlightenment?

Understandably, the evaluation report urged that there should be a much sharper rationale and objectives, a much clearer idea and style and an appropriate management system. The rationale that the Pfeiffer pannel suggested was a programme that seeks to achieve the movement of outstanding individuals to research institutions of their choice, that being the best way to transfer ideas. But it depends on what one means by "outstanding". I heard one scientist say to another, "Of course, his Nobel prize was only in medicine." Perhaps "outstanding" in the report does not quite mean those standards.

If one looks at the standards of a Medical Research Council post-doctoral fellowship, a Commonwealth fund fellow in the United States or a Harkness fellow, it seems that the standards aimed at in the human capital and mobility programme are somewhat different. We should be clear on that. The aim is not really to cater for the outstanding research scientist who will clearly be a leader in his generation. It is to provide a basic groundwork experience for a substantial proportion of working research scientists. That is a wholly rational objective and it provides a realistic context in which to look at the scheme.

The Pfeiffer panel said that the rationale should be to increase sharply the number of researchers who have been trained in another country. That fits in with the widening of the international background of the good, working, practical research scientist. However, when the panel discusses objectives, the abundance of them suggests that any one of them seems not to be strong enough to justify a programme of such magnitude. The panel speaks of excellence, mobility, diversity, transfer of technology, exchange of methodology, use of large research facilities, multi-disciplinarity, reduction of the brain drain of scientists leaving Europe, integration of the less-favoured regions and the openness to scientists from the European Free Trade Association and from eastern Europe. That is admirable, but the abundance of objectives suggests that there is still a lack of focus and of clear intention. If we recognise that the rationale aims to achieve a widespread international experience as an element in the experience of young scientists, mobility is a sufficient objective.

Where do the proposals leave us in terms of the prospect for the bulk of the programme? We are still talking about a substantial number of scientist years—perhaps not 5,000, but it would be somewhat over 3,000, or 600 per annum. On past figures, the numbers coming to the United Kingdom might be 200 and on the old ratios, the numbers going from the United Kingdom might be 30 to 40. If the United Kingdom came up to the levels of France and of Germany, it might be about 60 to 70. That means that the number of scientists to be received into the United Kingdom is larger than the number of scientists financed at this level by any research council, and the number leaving the United Kingdom would be as large as a big research council. We are not talking about a marginal element in the post-doctoral experience and training of scientists in the United Kingdom. Is that what we want? It may be, but there are some sordid practical points to consider first.

How will the Treasury argue about the additionality of the expenditure? Will the Treasury argue that the number of scientists received in this country should be counted as expenditure from the science budget, or will it count the number of scientists of British origin who are studying abroad as the figure to be notionally charged against the science budget—or neither?

What should our attitude be? Seeing the broad shape of the scheme, should we welcome it as spreading British influence, the British scientific tradition and the British scientific culture, or should we be cautious about losing British know-how and misapplying scarce British resources needed for British science?

I come down firmly on the view that we should continue to and be glad to extend the influences of British scientific culture. That is of undoubted benefit to the country in the long run, and to Europe. We must also go on to argue that if imbalance and unevenness are inevitable in the structure of a programme such as this, they must be redressed in some way. The pressures from the Government have been to try to redress them within the human capital and mobility programme; hence the call for an increase in support for research networks and twinning access to services provided in large research facilities, and for the organisation of European scientific conferences. I do not think that that goes wide enough, because I do not think that the imbalance can be redressed in that way.

If we look at where British scientific and technological interests lie, we can see a pressing need to increase our technological competitiveness. There are substantial areas where we can learn a great deal from other European countries. For example, there is obviously a capability in production engineering in Germany that is not as strongly represented in the United Kingdom. Although Britain produces admirable industrial designers, their use in British industry falls far behind the use of industrial designers in Italian industry. There will be other areas in which we have much to learn from other European countries and the redress of the balances should be sought across the European framework programmes as a whole.

If that is the framework of thinking, what about the other heads of expenditure under this line in the framework programme? The scientific networks are undoubtedly important. It is of great value to be able to travel and visit other people working in the same areas. If one compares the freedom with which, let us say, British Aerospace travels to and from Toulouse on the airbus project with the parsimony with which co-operating groups of scientists are able to travel between universities in France and the United Kingdom, one can see that there is a gross inefficiency in the networking of scientists.

To suggest that extra money is needed to staff large facilities implies that something has gone wrong with the budgeting since the facilities were first proposed. The budgeting should have provided for efficient use of the facilities on the scale at which they were being created. It is arguable that international access to those facilities is different from just increasing the purely British access. That should have been covered one way or another and it should not be a permanent feature of a programme such as this. For example, one does not build a school and then institute a separate programme to produce children to fill it. One does not build a power station and then set about finding a market for the power generated. The operating expense of large facilities needs to be planned integrally with the capital cost from the beginning.

The subject of European conferences raises a separate issue. It is admirable that the European Science Foundation should undertake the task of organising them, but, in itself, the foundation deserves consideration and funding on a basis different from merely the organisation of conferences. Conferences may be an important part of communication, but the European Science Foundation, as the meeting place of the science funding bodies of the different European countries, warrants a larger role than merely the organisation of conferences. If it has that larger role, the organisation of conferences is purely incidental to it.

I now come to the management of the programme. Is the practice of choosing institutions and allowing them to choose fellows right, regardless of whether it is supervised by a type 1 committee, for which the Commission argues, or a type 3 committee which, as the Minister explained, gives greater powers to the scientists to influence the Commission. That raises a wider question about methods of evaluation and organisation of national research funding.

The Pfeiffer panel is an admirable model of how to go about evaluation. However, if that model were applied to national funding programmes of scientific activities some major issues would be raised. There are certainly grounds for unease in the United Kingdom. For example, the level of grant for doctoral students is appallingly low and there is a lack of career prospects for young scientists once they are trained. There is a lack of follow-up by the research councils of former grant-holders or even principal investigators.

There are similar problems in France, such as the rigidity of the CNRS. In Germany, the length of the apprenticeship period is excessive. The apprentice scientist does not get out from under the professor until his mid-thirties. In Italy, the number of jobs which individuals hold is a problem.

I do not in the least wish to tear up the entire structure of European science and start again, but there should be consultation between the authorities in different countries about how they see national patterns evolving in relation to the European pattern. The machinery does not exist within the United Kingdom Government at present to make an appropriate contribution to such dialogue.

The Minister who opened the debate is not responsible for the European framework programme. The Minister who is responsible not only is a member of another House but belongs to another Department. The Department of Trade and Industry is responsible for representing Britain on science programmes in the European Community.

Following an interesting report in *The Independent* yesterday, we look forward to hearing the result of the Prime Minister's reflections over Christmas on the organisation of the machinery of government in Britain. The article said of the structure within the United Kingdom and Britain:

"science and technology has been crippled in terms of representation in Brussels, compared to the French and the Germans. Both these countries have strong, central ministries for research and technology, headed by forceful politicians who have secured their national advantage in negotiations with the European Commission. In contrast, putting the EC case for British technology has been the responsibility of the junior Minister in the DTI, whereas scientific research which falls within the DES's remit has gone unrepresented."

That is not satisfactory management of United Kingdom science. Participation in shaping European science for the future must be a major consideration in the appropriate machinery of Government in Britain. We cannot simply ignore the structures that exist in other European Community member countries.

That is nowhere more starkly borne home than in the programme that we are debating, with a fair degree of information about what is going on; it costs some £11 million of British public expenditure. Yet tomorrow the Science and Engineering Research Council will make decisions on how to make good the shortfall from the science budget announced by the Government of some £40 million in the next fiscal year. That has been done without

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

any debate in this place or any consideration by Ministers about the specific effects on the SERC of the decisions in the science budget.

British science is in a deeply unhappy state. European programmes cannot possibly make good the troubles that we face, but at least we can give this programme a cautious welcome in the sense that it is a building block in a framework which can be built to the greater advantage of the United Kingdom in a more adequate framework of science policy.

10.14 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I do not wish to add a great deal to what has been said. I agree with the comments by those on both Front Benches. The Minister managed to open the debate with a clarity which described technology without being too technical and comitology without being comatose. The complexities of the programme are great. Indeed, it is difficult for the House in such a short debate to understand and explore in detail precisely what is being provided for.

I agree with the burden of some comments of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) about shortcomings in research, particularly blue sky research, in the United Kingdom in recent years. When one talks to university vice-chancellors and principals one hears the complaint year on year that not enough pure research is taking place and that industry is leading the nature of research, which means that research tends to be rather too specific. A consequence is that many university laboratories and engineering houses have become testing shops for products which have already been developed.

It is welcome to see a programme in the European Community which appears to allow for a considerable amount of mainly blue sky research to take place. It is to be hoped that a consequence of the programme will be that original thought, original design and original technique will come within Europe and be developed throughout industry.

I agree with the emphasis of the motion on enhancing the development of European science and Europe's industrial competitiveness. I hope that the Government will ensure that this programme does not disappear into the European bureaucracy and that we can evaluate its contribution to science within industry.

The programme will be a success if it means that European companies make products and employ people to manufacture products that bring us to the forefront of world science and technology, which will mean that we compete fully with the Japanese and Americans. However, if it merely ensured that scientists had the opportunity to partake in some nice, interesting research that had no ultimate practical applications, it would be a failure. Therefore, I hope that the Government will ensure that, within the Community, this programme is fully monitored so that we may see some real results which will enable us to point to another European success in research and development.

10.18 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth: This has been a helpful debate. It has been useful to the House to hear the views of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), both of whom represent their Front Benches. It is pleasing that there has been considerable agreement among the parties on much of the ground that has been covered.

The hon. Gentleman wondered why such a high proportion of beneficiaries under the science programme in framework 2 had come to this country. As he surmised, I suspect that it is because of the strength of science and the attractiveness of our country to European students to work and learn here. That is part of my response to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. British scientists aspire to further opportunities. We all want more resources to be made available for science and to see the extraordinary wealth of scientific talent in this country find its fullest opportunity. But I remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that public expenditure in support of the science base has increased by 23 per cent. above inflation during the period of Conservative rule. We have not stinted on resources. There are periods when expansion is faster and slower, but let nobody doubt the desire of the Government to give the best support we can, on behalf of society at large, to the quality and achievements of British science.

I was interested to hear the hon. and learned Gentleman suggest that industry was playing perhaps too large a part—was making up some kind of shortfall—in support of science. Many others believe that there has not been a sufficiently strong research and development effort in British industry. It is partly for that reason that the Government have chosen to withdraw funding from near-market research, so making it inevitably a requirement of our industries that they invest in the research that they properly should be doing themselves. By that means, we are able to transfer the resources that would otherwise be spent in the area of near-market research to pure science and that is already leading to a strengthening of our science base.

I am anxious to respond to some of the points of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South. I was in sympathy with almost everything he said about European framework programmes 2 and 3. It is right that evaluation needed improving and that the Pfeiffer report passed some very severe strictures on the evaluation that took place. One of our primary concerns is to make sure that in the commitment of substantial added resources to that programme, we make sure that the priorities are sensibly identified, that there is proper management, that what we are supporting is support for excellence and that we are developing a programme for education and training for the body of scientists, who should benefit from an experience of quality in Europe as a whole.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South stressed that we had not done as well as we might under framework programme 2 and the SCIENCE programme. It is fair to remind him that, from the point of view of experience so far, on average the United Kingdom has received back 22 per cent. of framework programme funds, which is more than a juste retour.

Under the SCIENCE programme, which we expect the human mobility programme to continue, nearly 30 per cent. of all recipient laboratories were in the United Kingdom. I take it as a benefit to us that we had so many people coming to study and work here. I take it as a matter of pride for British science, as does the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, that the United Kingdom took part in more than 70 of the 114 laboratory twinnings.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the range of objectives in framework programme 3 and in the human mobility line was perhaps too diffuse. He recited a series of quoted purposes which he finally characterised as admirable, and on that we all agree. But again, the key point is sharpness of focus to ensure that the objectives are clearly identified and are right.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South rated as a high priority, and a valuable feature of the programme, the emphasis on mobility and networking. Later in his remarks he referred to the problems of developing satisfactory career structures and opportunities for research scientists. Those are serious problems, and it is a help to know that the framework programme will at least ensure that there is a well-designed, full range of opportunities for further education and training for post-doctoral scientists. That will give strength to those who have the benefit of participating in the programme and will mean that they are better placed in the competitive stakes for subsequently seeking more permanent appointments in their careers.

Clearly, in the world of modern science in which there is a high degree of specialisation, if people are working at or near the frontiers of science there will inevitably be difficulties in the provision of long-term career opportunities for people who are highly specialised. The best people proceed with confidence from one contract to the next, if they do not actually hold long-term university posts or have long-term appointments as professional scientists. But if others move from academic work into industrial employment, it is not necessarily a terrible misfortune. There are great benefits for our economy and the hon. Member for Motherwell, South referred to the need for improved technology transfer and for the high degree of academic skill that some of our best scientists and engineers have to be transferred to and reflected in the production processes in United Kingdom industry. Therefore, I am not discouraged when I view the scene.

I hope that I can reassure the hon. Member for Motherwell, South that the Treasury will take a more benign view than he expects. I do not indulge in vacuous optimism, but we should put the expenditure on the programme in proportion. The participation of the Department of Education and Science in framework programme 3, involves under 2 per cent. of the science budget. Therefore, our participation does not have any serious or realistically measurable effect on the size of the science budget as a whole. The hon. Gentleman's fears about additionality are groundless.

The hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention to the problems of management at the large facilities in western Europe, on which we keep a vigilant watch. He will have noted that last week, in a decision shared with our Community partners, we refused to agree to a proposed 2 per cent. increase in the CERN budget for 1992. We are determined that there should be proper control of such massive organisations which dispose of immense sums of money.

A positive feature of the programme is that it intends, realistically, through the mobility programme, to bring those facilities into fuller use and to give a larger number of scientists the opportunity to use them and gain experience.

I was pleased that we had such a wide measure of agreement, both in our scepticism of aspects of the management of framework programme 2 and in the essential purposes that we recognise as valuable in framework programme 3.

I parted company with the hon. Gentleman on his familiar strictures about the condition of British science. I shall not repeat what I said in response to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. As for the observations of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South about the structure and organisation, and responsibility in Government for science, he looks forward with tremendous relish to the day when the millenium dawns and he presides over a separate Ministry of Science. However, he and all those involved should reflect carefully on whether an individual, specialist science ministry would carry the force and clout in Whitehall that he and I would want it to do, in recognition of our concerns for the well-being of British science.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Minister aware that some of us went to the interesting lecture, excellently presented, by the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) at the Royal Society? I understand that the hon. Member for Havant is taking a group of scientists to see the Prime Minister on this very subject on, I think, 14 January. This should be a question that is open to discussion. I understand that the Secretary of State for Education and Science is to be there—perhaps he will report to the House on that interesting meeting.

Mr. Howarth: I think that we can all readily say that my right hon. Friends are concerned to find the best system within Government for supporting British science.

10.29 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am prompted to intervene by the last interchange, the question of the responsibility for science within government, and by some of the Minister's comments—although I do not want to be as specific as the debate, which naturally focused on a particular programme.

At last summer's British Association for the Advancement of Science conference in Swansea, it was widely commented that there is still inadequate recognition in government of the importance of science. This is not meant as a personal criticism—as the Minister knows—but that is borne out by the very fact that within the DES, science is so sidelined that it is the part-responsibility of a non-Secretary of State—that is, of a junior Minister—and has a relatively small budget. It is virtually buried in the Department of Education and Science, instead of being an activity which could be influential across many Departments. That matter is of considerable academic and practical concern.

I do not dissent from the Minister's claims about the Treasury's increase in science spending in the most recent public expenditure round. However, he must not be complacent. He will no doubt recall the presidential address given at the British association's conference. Although it did not relate specifically to further and higher education and current academic performance among both postgraduates and leading scientists, it foretold a future of some doom if our education system does not significantly improve.

This country cannot afford to be complacent. In the forecast era of considerably more mobility within Europe, we shall be more at risk from scientific interchange in more

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

competitive circumstances and suffer some disadvantage in developing the seed corn of scientific advance, unless we show considerably more commitment to the prerequisites for more successful science.

Mr. Alan Howarth: As I told the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), we have made a major increase of 23 per cent. in real terms in science funding during the life of this Government. That is taken on board by all scientists, and naturally the British Association does as much pleading as others for yet more increased expenditure.

I dissent very much from the hon. Gentleman when he says that science is somehow sidelined in my Department. My right hon. Friend is Secretary of State for both education and science, and he gives high weighting to his responsibilities in relation to the latter. Science pervades the whole of modern government. There is not a Department in Whitehall to which science is not immensely important.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) must always take that into account in his consideration of what might be an appropriate structure. Will he, in his putative Department of Science, be such a powerful ringmaster that he will be able to crack his whip and have the big beasts respond in the way that he wants?

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was absolutely right to say that science teaching in our schools must be improved. We agree entirely and that is why we introduced the subject into the national curriculum, which is laying the foundations for an across-the-board increase in the level of attainment in scientific studies.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the Minister for his mini-speech by way of an intervention. As to the structure of government, there is a proper constitutional argument to be made about whether an independent science Ministry could be justified, in terms of having the clout within government. Such an argument could properly be made in respect of any proposed Department.

There is a widely held view within the scientific community that science is not perceived as sufficiently important in the whole focus of Government investment and interest, not just in the Department of Education and Science, and the president of the British Association set out what will happen if we do not attach significant importance to it and provide more investment. That the Government are aware of the dangers of complacency is a start. It would be a good thing if the House and the Government put science more regularly on the agenda, because without good science we shall not do very well in future.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7053/90 relating to a programme for research and technological development in the field of Human Capital and Mobility; endorses the Government's view that this European Community initiative will present an appropriate means of providing assistance to the mobility of scientists, hence enhancing the development of European science and Europe's industrial competitiveness; and supports the Government's policy of pursuing clear scientific and managerial objectives within the programme to promote effective delivery of the specific training and mobility measures proposed.

CENSUS (CONFIDENTIALITY) BILL *[LORDS]*

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That, in respect of the Census (Confidentiality) Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

HOUSE OF COMMONS (SERVICES)

Ordered,

That Sir George Young be discharged from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) and Mr. David Lightbown be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Darren Brook

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

10.35 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): It is with great sadness that I have to bring the case of the late Darren Brook, a young offender, aged 19, to the Floor of the House of Commons. Darren was convicted of an assault on a publican. It was his first offence. He had never been in trouble before. He was of previous good character. He was given a nine-months prison sentence in a prison for young offenders. He was taken to Durham jail, a hard-line prison. There he was kept for three days. During those three days, he was subjected to the most brutal treatment of any prisoner in the prison, the perpetrator of which is now serving a life sentence.

During those three days, Darren was bullied and beaten, and even had his head shaved. All hon. Members should read what the court heard went on in those three days. It is a very sad case, and an indictment of our prison system. He was beaten up, he had a black eye for at least two days, he had a severe cut on one side of his eye and one on his hand, which was so swollen that his knuckles could not be seen. At some time during the 56 hours that he was in Durham prison, his head was shaved.

The prisoners saw what happened, but in prison no one squeals. No one says anything. They knew that this lad was being subjected to bullying and brutality, but no one else heard or saw it.

At the end of the trial, Judge Bell asked why Brook had been locked up with Carter, the man serving a life sentence, who had a long criminal record, and why prison officers did not notice injuries to Brook when other inmates clearly spotted them. After being told that an internal investigation had found no explanation, the judge said:

"I take the view that what has been revealed indicates barbaric practices perpetrated by one prisoner on another, which should not have been tolerated by any civilised society."

All this happened in one of Her Majesty's prisons. A young lad, a first offender, went to serve his punishment there and ended up in a wooden box. That should not happen in this day and age.

I have already called for an independent inquiry into why this happened. The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) has called for one too. I do not know whether there will be one. I am told that the governor of Durham prison has conducted an internal inquiry. That means nothing, because he has done his job in his own kingdom, and he would certainly try to paint it white.

Certain questions must be asked. Was there a lack of supervision? Was there undermanning at the prison? Could it happen again? That is what the parents of the child came to see me about——

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Does my hon. Friend recall the case of Richard Rowland, who committed suicide in Durham prison 18 months ago? His family had begged and pleaded with the prison authorities to supervise him because they were extremely worried about his mental health. That was not done, and he committed suicide while his cellmates slept. That, too, was due to manning levels. Something must be done to afford some security to the relations of men serving time.

Mr. Campbell: I could not agree more. I was coming to that point. Supervision is important in prisons such as Durham. I have contacted the authorities who run the gaol. They told me that, at certain times of day, they are not in control of it. Someone had better go and have a look at Durham prison, or we shall have another Brixton on our hands.

There were no regular cell inspections; the authorities have not got the time. There was no observation, because they do not have the time. The officers do not work much overtime, and if they do, they are given days off in lieu —if they are lucky.

Why was this young man not sent to a young offenders prison straight away? Why are young offenders sent to hard prisons and put in cells with hardened criminals? These questions can be answered only by an independent inquiry. There should also have been an inquiry into the suicide case that my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) mentioned.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): How did the man die?

Mr. Campbell: He died from bullying and beatings. He was forced to tear his pillow case into strips, whereupon the perpetrator tied a noose to the bars of the cell and made the victim put his head into it. The third man in the cell put a towel over his head because he did not want to watch. He said afterwards that he heard Brook say, "I don't want to die."

The perpetrator, who is now serving a life sentence, kicked the stool away, and that was the end of Darren Brook. I have heard it said, although it has been denied, that if prisoners are in a cell with someone who hangs themselves, they get remission because of the trauma that they have experienced.

Mr. Skinner: Is that so?

Mr. Campbell: It is true. That will also come out in the inquiry—but in an independent inquiry, not one carried out by the governor. The House and the Opposition demand an independent inquiry.

10.44 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am sure that we can agree that it is a matter of great regret that the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) needed to accomplish this task this evening, and to raise this subject. I think that he was quite right to do so, and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) would probably also have wished to be associated with the debate.

I do not think that I need to add to what has already been said by the hon. Members for Blyth Valley and for Easington (Mr. Cummings) about the distressing nature of the events surrounding the death and murder of Darren Brook. The death of any prisoner in custody is a matter of great regret. It is especially tragic when it occurs in such violent circumstances, and involves such a young man. It is a waste of life. It is a grievous loss to his family and to his friends, and I take the opportunity to express sympathy to them on behalf of the whole prison service.

I should add that such an incident is also obviously a traumatic experience for the prison. I share the hon. Member's profound concern. There were certainly warning signs which could, and perhaps should, have been apparent despite the extremely short interval between

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

Darren Brook's reception and his death at the hands of his cellmate. As the hon. Member for Blyth Valley has said, the cellmate has recently been convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment, but I cannot let the fact that a fellow inmate has been found guilty of this horrific murder absolve me, or the prison, from our responsibility to protect anyone in our care.

As the hon. Member for Blyth Valley has said, Darren Brook was received into the young offender wing at Durham Prison on 3 January, having been sentenced to nine months custody in a young offenders institution, for offences of wounding and occasioning actual bodily harm. It is normal practice for young offenders sentenced to a period of custody to be received into a young offender wing at a local prison to be assessed for allocation to a suitable young offender institution. It is important to stress that young offenders at Durham are kept separate from the rest of the prison and do not mix with adult offenders.

However, as the hon. Gentleman said, early on the morning of 6 January, Darren Brook was found hanged in his cell, which he shared with two other young offenders. His two cellmates at first claimed that he had committed suicide. The police were immediately called in, and one of the cellmates, Kenneth Carter, was subsequently charged with the murder. As we know, he has since been found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.

It is clear that there was lack of supervision during the period between Mr. Brook's reception into the prison and his subsequent death. The hon. Gentleman has correctly pointed out that statements from other prisoners appear to show that Carter assaulted Darren Brook on the evening of 4 January, and that he had a swollen right eye, broken skin on his right hand and a bruised left hand as a result.

During the course of the next day, the young prisoners on the wing were allowed a recreation period, supervised by prison staff. No member of staff noticed the injury to Darren Brook's eye, or the other injuries, either then or during the rest of the day. Darren Brook did not complain or seek medical treatment for his injuries. Nor did he report the bullying by his cellmates to a member of staff. However, it is clear from the evidence of the third occupant of the cell that his condition was the result of attacks by Carter.

When this happened, the newly-appointed governor had not yet taken up his post. He arrived on 7 January and immediately began a full investigation into both the circumstances of the death and the management of the young offenders wing. It is therefore not true to say that the governor was, in effect, trying to cover his tracks. He was a new appointment; he had not been associated with the prison before; and he came in to find a very serious problem.

Let me explain what happened subsequently: it may allay the hon. Gentleman's fears somewhat. The governor discovered several shortcomings in the management of the young offender wing. There was no selection process for allocating young offenders to cells; the majority of young offenders were housed three to a cell; the young offender regime was poor, with little opportunity for constructive use of time or activities to help personal development. Certainly staff continuity on the wing was poor; because of the wide range of work undertaken by local prisons such as Durham, together with the importance of servicing the courts, there were frequent abrupt changes of staff on the wing.

No cell inspections or visits to young offenders were taking place, as the hon. Member for Blyth Valley has pointed out. Too many young offenders were being housed in Durham: at the time of the incident, there were 40, and allocations to young offender institutions were often unreasonably delayed.

The governor reported his findings, and made immediate changes to improve conditions. The practice of housing young offenders three to a cell ceased immediately. Young offenders are now allocated to young offender institutions within three days of being sentenced, with the vast majority being transferred to suitable establishments within one week of arrival at Durham. The number of young offenders held has been considerably reduced: at present, only 14 are being held in Durham.

The regime has been improved, and, although the wing is not intended to replace a young offender institution and will never be able to offer the wide range of educational and recreational facilities that are available at a proper young-offender establishment, young offenders now have the opportunity to attend education classes and enjoy an enhanced programme of physical recreation.

Staff continuity on the wing has been made a priority, and there is now an identifiable wing manager. Wing supervision has also been enhanced by the daily visit of a member of the senior prison management. In addition, all young offenders are now seen on a weekly basis by a member of the board of visitors. But perhaps the most important change is that staff on the wing are now given explicit instructions, with clear briefing, on their responsibility to detect bullying.

At the conclusion of the trial of Kenneth Carter, the trial judge, Mr. Justice Potts, asked the prison governor to comment on the circumstances surrounding the murder. The governor described the changes that I have just outlined. Mr. Justice Potts expressed his satisfaction at the steps taken at the prison to avoid a similar occurrence—and I believe that the correct action has been taken to avoid any further mishaps of this kind.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley made a number of allegations, and I hope that what I have said has allayed his fears. I fully understand his deep and passionate feeling about the circumstances surrounding the death of Darren Brook.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: I am pleased to learn that changes have been made, but I must again make my most important allegation. I have spoken to the people who run the prison, and I have been told that, at certain times of the day, they are not in control. They say that they are overworked and undermanned, and have not enough time. The Minister has said that things have changed, but that is what I was told today, and, if that is what I am being told today, as far as I am concerned nothing has changed.

Mrs. Rumbold: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern. If that is his most recent information, I shall take the matter back and make inquiries on his behalf. I shall try to reassure him later, by letter, if not by means of a personal visit. I am making a great effort to try to visit as many institutions as I can and intend to come to the north-east to see for myself some of the institutions and establishments there. It is important absolutely to satisfy

oneself that our establishments are run as humanely and satsifactorily as possible. Given the circumstances surrounding local prisons in many busy towns and cities, it is even more important to ensure that, having happened once, such an occurrence does not happen in the future. It is my intention—I know that it is the intention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary—that such an event should not occur in future.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that bullying among the young offender population is a problem that the prison service shares with many other residential institutions. In 1984, we took action to give guidance to all those who deal with young offenders. We gave advice on how to detect and prevent the spread of bullying among young offenders. We made the advice widely available throughout the young offender system. The nature of the bullying of Darren Brook by Kenneth Carter, which escalated in the course of 24 hours from simple physical abuse to murder, was of a very different order from anything previously encountered in the prison service. Obviously, we hope that that was a unique event, but certain lessons have definitely been learned.

As I have said, I give my personal undertaking that I shall investigate the hon. Gentleman's assertions and come back to him in due course.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 19 December 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MIDLAND METRO (PENALTY FARES) BILL *[Lords]*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday 17 January.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Before we start?

Dr. Godman: Before we start. Why is not a single Scottish Minister at the Fisheries Council meeting in Brussels today?

Mr. Speaker: If we ever get to that question perhaps we can deal with the issue.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Agriculture

1. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the future of the Scottish agricultural industry.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): My right hon. Friend has not yet had an opportunity to meet the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland, but looks forward to doing so.

Mr. Welsh: Is the Minister aware of the massive cash flow crisis facing the hill, upland and livestock sectors? The income from cast ewes has fallen by 50 per cent. in the past year, while income from cattle is down by £50 and the income from sheep has fallen by £5 per head. That is happening at a time of massive input cost increases, high inflation and high interest rates. When will the Minister announce the livestock premium and will it be adequate to meet those problems? Will he ensure an immediate and maximum payment of premiums so that enough cash is available to allow the industry to overcome its major cash flow crisis?

Mr. Forsyth: My noble Friend Lord Strathclyde, who is attending the Fisheries Council meeting in Brussels, is well aware of the problem to which the hon. Gentleman has drawn attention. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we hope to be able to announce the levels of support shortly. The support given to the livestock sector in the hills and uplands of Scotland amounts to £100 million, which is testimony to the importance that the Government attach to those areas of agriculture.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware from his constituency of the crisis among livestock producers in the hill and upland areas. We are nearly at the end of the year and the new rates of hill livestock compensatory allowance come into effect on 1 January. When will we know those new rates? Can my hon. Friend assure me that they will be substantially increased—I hope to the maximum allowed under the European rules?

Mr. Forsyth: I assure my right hon. Friend that we shall make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Wilson: Does the junior Minister share the view of his ministerial colleague, Lord Strathclyde, so crudely expressed on Scottish Television last week, that any Scottish farmers in financial difficulties now are there through their own business incompetence? Is not that an insufferably complacent and offensive statement for a Minister to make? Does he share Lord Strathclyde's other remarkable opinion that Scotland does not need a permanent presence in Brussels because those involved would be more interested in junketing and self-publicity than in job creation, or does the Minister accept the rather more intelligent opinion of the Scottish Development Agency on that matter?

Mr. Forsyth: I am confident that my noble Friend will do everything possible to support our farmers. The support that the Government have given to those in the uplands areas and to the hill farmers is testimony to the seriousness with which we view the matter.

The way forward for farming in Scotland involves an intelligent approach to the difficult problems—an approach which my noble Friend is applying. Judging from the tone and tenor of the hon. Gentleman's question, however, he has yet to address himself to those problems. We look forward to hearing about Labour party policy in that regard.

Local Government Finance

2. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the Government's review of the poll tax system in Scotland.

11. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the review of the community charge.

13. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of the poll tax in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has announced the Government's intention to conduct a careful and fundamental review of the community charge arrangements in Scotland, England and Wales.

Mr. Home Robertson: Unlike the Secretary of State for the Environment, the Secretary of State for Scotland has been absolutely consistent on the poll tax. He voted for it no fewer than 35 times on the Floor of the House and in Committee, despite our warnings that that hated tax would be as unworkable as it is unjust. The right hon.

Gentleman has since described it as a remarkable success story. Will he now admit that there can be no compromises on the poll tax, whatever minor parties might say, and that it must go as soon as possible? What is more, people in Scotland should be compensated for the fact that they have had to suffer that tax for one year more than the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: The people of Scotland had the advantage of getting rid of the extremely unfair domestic rating system a year earlier than people south of the border. It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman has no positive suggestions to make. The community charge has established a greater degree of commitment on the part of residents of local areas, who contribute in far greater numbers to the cost of local services.

Mr. Robert Hughes: May I respond to the Secretary of State's request for positive suggestions by saying that if he wants a fundamental review, the most positive thing he could do would be to scrap the poll tax altogether?

Mr. Lang: Again, the hon. Gentleman offers no alternative. He does not seem to recognise that local services must be paid for. I thought that he might recommend the so-called roof tax, but then I recalled that only 10 per cent. of the Scottish people support the roof tax and only about 20 per cent. of the Labour party—which designed it—supports it.

Mr. Harry Ewing: The Secretary of State had better be careful about criticising the so-called roof tax because, if the Secretary of State for the Environment is anything to go by, that is what we shall finish up with. I look forward to the day when the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box to propose such a tax in legislation.

Has the Secretary of State for Scotland had any discussions with his pals in the Scottish National party, who refused to join in the constitutional convention to discuss the future of Scotland, but are desperate yet again to save the Tories' face on the poll tax?

Mr. Lang: I understand that the roof tax was thought up in two minutes; it certainly looks like it. But perhaps we should take the advice of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), who said that the roof tax should be confined to the dustbin of experience. With regard to the Scottish National party, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has made it clear that he is interested in hearing the views of any Opposition party that cares to make a constructive contribution to the debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever nonsense we hear from the Opposition Benches, the Conservative party got rid of the rates—that was welcomed in Scotland—and we have no intention of returning to them? Does he further agree that one of the advantages of the community charge is that it makes councillors and councils accountable and that, whatever modifications we adopt, that aspect must remain?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about greater accountability. It is an important achievement of which we should not lose sight. More than 30 changes have already been made to the community charge since the original legislation was passed. It is in the nature of such new arrangements that they come under regular review and that improvements can be made.

Sir David Steel: Does the Secretary of State recall that the Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), voted for the poll tax in Scotland a year before he took to the barricades against it in England and Wales? In the light of that, will he extract a promise from him that any legislation to abolish the poll tax or replace it with local income tax will come a year earlier in Scotland than in England and Wales?

Mr. Lang: That is rather a facile point. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to take part in the consultations, he will have the opportunity to put such matters to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Maxton: Is the Secretary of State aware that there will be considerable consternation and anger among the people of Scotland today as it becomes obvious that the Secretary of State has no intention, if he can get away with it, of abolishing the poll tax but intends only a dragged-out review with a few minor changes at the end of it? Is he aware that the people of Scotland want immediate relief from the tax by abolition of the 20 per cent. rule, backdating of all rebates to 1 April 1989 and legislation within the next three months to abolish the tax completely?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman and his party care to remove any preconditions, they are welcome to take part in consultations on what should replace the existing arrangements.

Constitutional Convention

3. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his response to the proposals of the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

Mr. Lang: My views are well known. The organisation that calls itself the Scottish Constitutional Convention and its proposals are a distraction from the real issues that face the Scottish people.

Mr. Maclennan: If the Secretary of State believes that the proposals of the Scottish Constitutional Convention are not perfect, will he at least enter into a dialogue with the political parties in Scotland that represent the overwhelming majority of the Scottish people? The Scottish people are persuaded that constitutional change to provide a democratic means of controlling the centralised administration is necessary to achieve the result to which the Government no doubt aspire. Why must we in Scotland, alone in western Europe, remain without proper democratic control over our Government when Spain, formerly the most centralised country in Europe, and France, the next most centralised country, are both moving towards effective provincial government?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman regards those views as important, he has the opportunity to put them forward in a number of places—not least on the Floor of this House, in the mother of parliaments.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Is the Secretary of State aware that "the organisation that calls itself the Scottish Constitutional Convention"
is representative of the Labour party, which sends 48 Members to the House, of the Liberal Democrats, who have a substantial and meaningful representation in the House, of the major Christian denominations in Scotland,

of the trade unions and of the regional and district councils in Scotland? Whom does the Secretary of State think that he represents?

Mr. Lang: I have the privilege to be the Secretary of State for Scotland and I thus represent Scotland and its people in the United Kingdom Parliament and in the United Kingdom Cabinet. What would happen to the Secretary of State for Scotland and his position in the Cabinet under the proposals of the Scottish Constitutional Convention? That is one of the fundamental questions that the body did not address.

Mr. Salmond: Now that there are three identifiable positions on the constitutional question in Scottish politics —devolution advocated by the convention parties, no change advocated by the Secretary of State for Scotland and independence in Europe advocated by the Scottish National party, why will not the Secretary of State for Scotland arrange to put the matter to the test and let the Scottish people decide on the three options in a fair referendum?

Mr. Lang: It is well known that, because the present constitutional arrangements do not work to the SNP's advantage, it seeks to change them. SNP Members may call it independence in Europe; what they actually mean is the separation of Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom, which would be immensely damaging for the people of Scotland.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Scotland does not need another tier of government —and certainly not one with the bureaucratic and interventionist aims put forward by the convention?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Not only would the Scottish assembly proposed by the Scottish Constitutional Convention add an extra tier of government, it would be an extra source of tax-raising designed to imposed an additional burden on the people of Scotland and to make it the highest-taxed part of the United Kingdom.

Local Government Finance

4. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will bring forward proposals to amend the poll tax legislation so that students will no longer have to pay 20 per cent. regardless of their circumstances.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The present arrangements for students will be considered as part of the wider review of the community charge.

Mrs. Fyfe: It falls to me to welcome the Minister on his reappearance at the Dispatch Box.

As the Minister and his colleagues will commit themselves today neither to abolishing the poll tax nor to abolishing the 20 per cent. rule, would he mind telling us exactly what they do propose to abolish?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her kind remarks. As my right hon. Friend made clear in relation to the review nothing has been ruled in and nothing has been ruled out.

Mr. Worthington: I, too, welcome the hon. Gentleman in his impersonation of Lazarus. The Scottish Office instructs regional councils to pursue debtors diligently, and that includes students. The Scottish Office has said that the tuition and maintenance elements of a student's income cannot be reclaimed, so what part of a student's income can be reclaimed? Is not it about time that the regional councils were stopped from wasting their time pursuing unrecoverable debts from people of modest incomes and we got rid of the 20 per cent. rule?

Mr. Stewart: Students are under the same obligation to pay as anyone else. On the hon. Gentleman's more general point, there are reports in today's press of the strong and well-merited criticisms by the chief auditor for the eastern area of the procedures undertaken by Labour-controlled Central regional council. I hope that the hon. Gentleman who represents the official Opposition will join the chief auditor in condemning the Labour councillors on Central regional council.

Incinerator, Renfrew

5. **Mrs. Irene Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to take full account of the views of the community when considering whether to license the incinerator plant at Renfrew.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Lady on her election as Member for Paisley, North.

In considering the application from Cleveland Fuels Ltd., account will be taken of all relevant considerations received in response to public consultation.

Mrs. Adams: Now that the Secretary of State is in his new post, when will he stop shuffling the matter round his desk and come back with an answer for not only the people of Renfrew, but the people of Yoker, Govan, Dumbarton and Paisley, who will all be affected by the emissions into the atmosphere from the plant, which is now burning 1·8 tonnes of toxic waste per hour? When will he come back with a decision on that? Will he assure us that planning permission will not be granted under the present terms for which it has been applied?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer is as soon as possible. Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate will be dealing with that matter under the general practice of determining such issues by delegated responsibility. The inspectorate will deal with air pollution, while representations on planning matters, such as noise and traffic effects, are for the planning authorities—there is a distinction. There are detailed, complex matters to be resolved. I understand that Glasgow district council has said that there are higher-than-expected levels of sulphur dioxide in the Scotstown district of the city. The causes of that are being investigated and will be taken into account before a decision is made. I can confirm that no decision has yet been made and the issues are being seriously considered.

Mr. McFall: Does the Minister know that I, too, have a constituency concern in this matter? A local whisky plant, J and B, has a blending plant at Renfrew. The company is extremely concerned at the siting of the incinerator plant. Will the Minister look at the comments of the regional chemist, who is worried about breaches of health and safety regulations because of the dioxins and

other acidic materials that are being released? Will he listen to hon. Members and their constituents and hold a public inquiry before the matter goes any further?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am certainly aware of the dioxin emissions. Apparently, traces of dioxins are formed when organic materials are burnt in the presence of chlorine, but I am informed that the rate of production can be minimised. Any registration granted in respect of a chemical incinerator or a comparable activity would include the condition that the required standards should be achieved. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 will be implemented as soon as possible. Last year, we went into those issues in detail in Committee.

Local Government Finance

6. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his plans to reform local government and local government finance in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The review of the financing of local government to which the Government are committed will be careful and fundamental.

Mr. Douglas: Why are we having this review at all? Is it because the Secretary of State for Scotland has extreme misgivings about the poll tax, because there has been a capitulation by the Labour party or because the people of Scotland have clearly shown that they do not want the tax? Will the Secretary of State come clean and tell the House whether we are having a review relating to devising a stable and just system in which the poll tax, as presently devised, would be excluded? Is the poll tax dead and are we looking for an indecent way to bury it in 1991?

Mr. Stewart: All new systems require regular review as they settle down. The community charge is the biggest change in local government finance for more than a century, so it is entirely reasonable at this stage to take a fundamental look at how the regime is working. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues were becoming seriously worried about the fact that the overwhelming bulk of Scottish public opinion believes that non-payers are a bunch of unprincipled freeloaders.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Strathclyde has had to make major cuts in its budget because of the poll tax and because it cannot collect the money. That has repercussions for communities such as mine in which unemployment is severe—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) keeps interrupting. He had a hearing and it would be helpful if others could have one, too. I remember the days when the hon. Gentleman stood as a Labour candidate on a Labour party ticket.

Because of the cuts in services, many people in our constituencies will be denied employment. What steps will the Minister take to help?

Mr. Stewart: Almost the entire House will sympathise with the direction in which the hon. Gentleman mainly aimed his criticism—two Benches behind him, not at the Government.

Of course, if the hon. Gentleman wants to see me about any of his constituency problems that are my direct responsibility, I shall be happy to see him.

As for non-payment, more than 90 per cent. of budgeted revenue for 1989-90 has been collected. Excluding Strathclyde and Lothian, the figure rises to 95 per cent.—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why SNP Members are laughing. This is a serious matter, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) told the House. It is for the regional councils to ensure that they collect revenue, as most of them are doing very successfully.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that it may be a point of frustration, but continue.

Mr. Douglas: One of the members of your Chairmen's Panel has used a very unparliamentary word—a shipyard term. I am willing to reciprocate and lower the tone to shipyard language. I invite the hon. Gentleman to repeat it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that I know no shipyard language.

Steel Industry

7. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to receive the final report of the Scottish Development Agency study into the steel industry in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I expect to receive the final report of the Scottish Development Agency study by the end of March, when I would hope to make public as much as possible of that report, subject only to considerations of commercial confidentiality. *[Interruption.]* I understand that the SDA steering group has now seen some preliminary findings from the consultants and, although I have not yet seen them, I hope that these, too, can be made public on the same basis.

Dr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was utterly impossible to hear the Minister's answer because of the antics going on in the Chamber. I could not make out the answer, so I cannot respond. Is it in order to ask the Minister to repeat his answer?

Mr. Speaker: I think, in the circumstances, that it is. I ask the Scottish Nationalists to behave in a parliamentary fashion.

Mr. Lang: I am happy to help the hon. Gentleman. I expect to receive the final report of the Scottish Development Agency study by the end of March, when I would hope to make public as much of it as possible, subject only to considerations of commercial confidentiality. I understand that the SDA steering group has now seen some preliminary findings from the consultants and, although I have not yet seen them, I hope that these, too, can be made public on the same basis.

Dr. Reid: Seven months after the announcement of the closure of Ravenscraig, the answer that we shall have to wait yet another four months is not just pathetic but criminally complacent. When will the organisation that calls itself the Scottish Office do something about steel? Does the Minister accept that if the hot strip mill is dismantled and removed the Motherwell plant will be impossible to sell? As one of the shop stewards said, it will be like an electric kettle without an element. What concrete

steps will the Secretary of State take to prohibit such removal? On Clydesdale, what concrete steps has he taken to ascertain whether there are potential purchasers and to facilitate such purchasers for all or part of the plant? If the Minister cannot give concrete answers to those questions it is obvious that he intends to do as little in his new post as he did in his last.

Mr. Lang: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman did not listen more carefully to my answer. He certainly had plenty of opportunity to hear it. Had he done so, he would have heard me say that the preliminary findings had been made available to the SDA working study and that I hoped that they would be made public, subject only to considerations of commercial confidentiality. The information will therefore be available in much less than the three or four months to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

The hon. Gentleman asked about disposal of the hot strip mill. I hope that during the first three months of next year it will be possible for the preliminary findings of the consultants' study to be taken fully into account in debates on this matter and to be considered by British Steel. It should be possible for further action to be decided upon in the light of the emerging information, ahead of closure of the strip mill at the beginning of April.

Dr. Bray: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Government have got themselves into the position that any future for Ravenscraig has to be in the interests of British Steel itself? Will he seek concrete discussions with British Steel, following the interim report, as to what might be in the interests of British Steel in terms of assistance from the Government for the opening of new markets and the introduction of new technology? Is he aware that already a west German flat products producer is being retained in operation to supply markets previously supplied by obsolete east German plant?

Mr. Lang: In the past 15 months, my right hon. and learned predecessor and I have had four meetings with British Steel and about five exchanges of correspondence. I do not think that anyone could accuse us of not being in touch with British Steel and we shall continue to keep in touch as apopropriate.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the consultants' findings. British Steel has co-operated with the consultants in the preparation of their report and has undertaken to consider the findings. There is every opportunity for the matter to be considered further in the proper quarters.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does not the history of the steel industry show that when politicians override the decisions of business men it costs jobs in industry as a whole in the long term? When politicians talk in terms of the need for commercial decisions to be overridden in the national interest, they are usually talking about their own narrow political interests.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes an effective point. From 1975 to 1985, no less than £14 billion of taxpayers' money had to be put into British Steel to support it when it was under nationalised control. It is important for this decision to be taken by British Steel as a commercial decision. Our purpose is to ensure that all possible relevant avenues are explored so that we can ensure that the interests of the Scottish economy are upheld.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State recognise that it is not enough to list his disappointments and disagreements with Sir Robert Scholey to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and to the press if no action follows? On his own evidence to the Select Committee, there have been expressions of interest about purchasing Ravenscraig as a going concern, but they have been blocked because of British Steel's withholding of vital information. What steps is the right hon. Gentleman taking to allow such interests to be pursued? Is not the withholding of that information a restriction on competition and offensive to the Government and to Scotland? Does it not also reopen the whole question of a possible referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission as being a restraint of trade?

Mr. Lang: We have encouraged British Steel to consider the disposal of those parts of the Scottish industry that are not required for its own purposes and we have encouraged those who have expressed interest in acquiring parts of the industry to approach British Steel with their offers. There are appropriate mechanisms by which competition issues can be pursued.

Stranraer and Cairnryan Ports

8. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated growth of passenger and freight ferry traffic at Stranraer and Cairnryan in the next five years; and what proposals he has to improve road and rail transport systems from these ports.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Estimates of future ferry traffic through Stranraer and Cairnryan are commercial matters for the companies concerned. A number of major road schemes have been completed on the A75 Gretna-Stranraer route and further road improvements are planned. Investment in railways is a matter for British Rail.

Mr. Taylor: Larne harbour is now the second largest in the United Kingdom for roll-on/roll-off freight traffic and the third largest for passenger-accompanied vehicles. It is handling more than 1·5 million people and last year traffic grew again by 8 per cent. As all that traffic is going either to Stranraer or Cairnryan, will the Minister spend some time during the Christmas recess considering a new traffic plan for the west of Scotland which will benefit the people who live there and those who travel from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland—increasing numbers of people travelling from the Republic are using that route —and give them greater access to the channel tunnel? That plan could be drawn up in consultation with the transport directors of the European Commission.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Some £70 million has already been spent on the A75. We recognise the importance of this, not just for the convenience of the hon. Gentleman's constituents who will reach their destinations more quickly, but for tourism. Construction of improvements between Carrutherstown and Hetland is underway and five further schemes worth nearly £20 million are in preparation. We take seriously the points that the hon. Gentleman has made and will keep in touch with the Northern Ireland Office on this subject.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware that this is an issue of great importance for all hon. Members representing

constituencies in Ayrshire, as well as for hon. Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland? Is he also aware that in the past few years there has been not an improvement but a deterioration in the transport system, with the removal of the overnight sleeper service from Stranraer to London and deterioration of the roads in Ayrshire? Can the Minister give an assurance that the Maybole and Girvan bypasses will be given priority in his roads programme and that if Strathclyde regional council agrees to remove its postponement of construction of its part of the A77, he will give the necessary finance to enable it to go ahead without any delay?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On the last point, it is difficult for the Scottish Office to build a road if it ends in a field. The A77 is essentially a matter for Strathclyde regional council. The council has taken the decision to delay its part of the scheme; the Scottish Office stands ready to put in hand the work from Glasgow city boundary to Malletsheugh, south of Newton Mearns.

We make decisions in March for the year ahead in relation to specific projects such as the bypasses that the hon. Gentleman mentioned and I will take into account what the hon. Gentleman has said. It will be considered along with many other projects.

British Rail has shown its commitment to the south-west of Scotland by investing in new class 156 super sprinter trains for use in services between Glasgow, Ayr and Stranraer and between Stranraer and Newcastle, and ScotRail is introducing its most modern rolling stock—the class 158 express units—between Glasgow, Ayr and Stranraer. I hope that those will be of considerable assistance to the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Constitutional Reform

10. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had about constitutional reform; and if he will make a statement.

12. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received in favour of a Scottish assembly during the past six months.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In the past six months, 19 written representations have been received about constitutional issues. A minority of them were in favour of a Scottish assembly.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply and I welcome him to the Dispatch Box. Does he agree that the representations received from the constitutional convention are flawed in that they do not address the situation affecting the Barnet formula for funding, or the number of Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies, and do not deal with the West Lothian question at all? Can he also—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question will take even longer if we have this sort of noise.

Mr. Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the convention is fraudulent and the fact that it has a front man wearing a dog collar does not change the fact that it is fraudulent because it knows that its proposals will never go through the House?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome. As usual, he speaks with great sense and knowledge. I agree with him entirely on the issue that he has raised. I can assure him that the Government will pay full attention to the views of all sensible people such as, for example, members of the North Tayside Conservative Association.

Mr. John Marshall: First, I congratulate my fellow St. Andrean on his promotion to the Government Front Bench. Does he agree that the majority of Scottish people recognise that the introduction of an assembly with tax-raising powers would result in Scotland having higher taxes than elsewhere in the United Kingdom, would discourage inward investment to Scotland and would result in Scotland being the most over-governed part of the United Kingdom and of the European Community?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. I agree entirely with what he said in his supplementary question. Although I do not believe that the people of Scotland generally attach a particularly high priority to constitutional change, my hon. Friend is right to criticise the proposals that have come from the self-elected body to which he refers.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I, too, welcome the hon. Gentleman's return to the Government Front Bench. Of the welcomes that he received from the two hon. Members who sit behind him, the hon. Members for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), one seemed to stick in the throat. The Minister can work that out for himself later.

When will the Minister reject the nonsensical view that Scotland receives a greater share of public expenditure than anywhere else in the United Kingdom? It is clear that the south-east of England still receives the largest share of public expenditure, no matter how the figures are assessed. The Minister should read the minutes of the Select Committee on Employment on the London Docklands development corporation. He will then discover the subsidy enjoyed by the south-east. The people of Scotland have spoken. Unless the present ministerial team can get it together, it will be the last time its members sit together representing Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome. I do not accept what he said in his supplementary question. I will send him the figures, which show without question that identifiable public expenditure per head in Scotland is far higher than in England and higher than in Wales.

Mr. Dewar: Talking about public attitudes, did the Minister notice that in *The Sunday Times*—a newspaper which I am sure he reads carefully—there was an article setting out the results of a MORI poll? It showed that the Scottish Constitutional Convention's proposals attracted three times as much support as the hon. Gentleman's preferred option of the status quo and twice as much support as the nationalists' position. The Minister will be aware that he does not represent direct Scottish participation in Brussels. Leaving aside the unfortunate views of Lord Strathclyde, will he clarify the Government's position and explain whether he stands by the recently expressed views of the Secretary of State that there should be direct Government participation in the form of the Scottish Office in Brussels or whether he supports the Treasury view that that is not necessary and should not take place?

Mr. Stewart: The result of the referendum in 1979, which is probably a painful memory for the hon. Gentleman, showed that, when faced with detailed and specific proposals spelling out the disadvantages of an Assembly as well as the claimed benefits, the electorate appreciates that an extra tier of government with extra taxation and all the problems to which my hon. Friends have referred is not the answer for Scotland.

The second part of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question seemed not to arise directly from the main question, although there is a later question on the Order Paper to which it may be relevant. I confirm that the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question was fully and comprehensively spelt out in my letter to him, which naturally had the full agreement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Self-governing Hospitals

14. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the Scottish hospitals opting for self-governing trust status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An announcement will be made as and when the procedures laid down for trust applications have been completed.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister accept that there is growing disquiet about the way in which the possibility of self-governing hospitals is being presented in Scotland? There is no evidence that the hospitals, the health service, the patients, the public or the staff want them, but they are being presented almost as a fait accompli.

Will the Minister assure us that, unlike the practice in England, if any such proposals come forward the public, the patients and the staff in the hospital and the catchment area affected will be consulted and their opinions taken fully into account? The people of Aberdeen and Grampian do not want self-governing hospitals forced upon them against their wishes.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken on two counts. First, he is mistaken in his suggestion that proposals are coming from anyone other than the consultants and the management. For example, the proposals for the Foresterhill hospital in Aberdeen have come from the consultants and the management, but they have not yet decided whether to submit them to the Scottish Office.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman is mistaken about consultations in England, just as he is mistaken about consultations in Scotland. All proposals for self-governing status are subject to consultation by the health boards. That has been clearly laid down. I commend to the hon. Gentleman the paper that we have published on the procedures for NHS trusts, which spells that out clearly.

Mr. McKelvey: Is the Minister aware that on 8 December a meeting was held in Kilmarnock city centre at which a poll was taken—it was a proper poll, as advised by MORI—on the opt-out proposals? Some 1,700 people voted, of whom 95·2 per cent. said that they would prefer the hospitals in their areas to remain within the ambit of the Ayrshire and Arran health boards. Only 3·7 per cent. were in favour of opting out, and there were two spoilt papers, representing 0·9 per cent. of the vote. Will the hon. Gentleman take that result into consideration if there are any applications from hospitals in Ayrshire to opt out?

Mr. Forsyth: I would not take seriously a poll conducted on a proposal that has not yet been made, when people were not aware of the details. If the hon. Gentleman is accurate with regard to the questions asked, I should be even more cynical about the results. Hospitals which apply for self-governing status will not be opting out of the NHS. They will remain part of the NHS and they will remain under contract to the health boards. They will remain subject to scrutiny of their performance by the health boards.

If the hon. Gentleman were to conduct a poll asking whether people favoured more decisions being taken by local management at local level and whether they favoured resources being determined by those most involved in the provision of services, he might get a different answer.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Whatever the merits or demerits of hospitals opting for their own management within the NHS under trust status, does my hon. Friend acknowledge that the position is very different in areas of high population, where there are a number of separate hospitals, compared with an area such as Aberdeen where there is a highly integrated hospital service based on the Foresterhill site? Does my hon. Friend agree that that creates different circumstances and may I have his undertaking that that aspect will be taken into account if proposals are put forward?

Mr. Forsyth: My right hon. Friend will be aware that Foresterhill is an example of a hospital which was created and brought into being by the community. It was initiated through the efforts of the community. Self-governing hospitals are about recreating the possibility for communities to be involved in the management and organisation of their hospitals. I am not surprised that Foresterhill has shown great interest in the opportunities that the Government are making available.

Mr. Galbraith: The Minister's response exacerbates our worries, both about consultation and about links with the local community. The reality is that opted-out, self-governing hospitals will be run from the centre—the Scottish Office will decide the priorities and processes by diktat.

The Minister's response about consultation in Kilmarnock highlighted the problem. What will be the consultation on opting out? Will it include the community, the trade unions, the churches, the regional councils and the district councils? Whose views will be taken into account and what weight will be given to them? In reality, will not the decision be made by a small clique on the health board and rubber-stamped by the Scottish Office?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman may go on saying that self-governing hospitals will be run by the Scottish Office, but that simply is not true. They will be independent trusts operating under contract with the health boards and subject to the Secretary of State's direction only if they fail to meet particular standards of patient care. The hon. Gentleman knows full well the position on consultation. Any proposals for self-governing status will be subject to consultation; trade unions, churches, the community and anyone else who wishes to comment will have an opportunity to do so.

I do not wish to embarrass the hon. Gentleman, but he himself has put forward some interesting ideas for the independent management of out-patient clinics and the

devolution of management to local level. Painful though it may be, he should therefore acknowledge that the proposals for self-governing status are very much in line with the thinking that he himself advances, even if he cannot bring himself to congratulate the Government on them. We look forward to the conversion that the Labour party underwent in relation to school boards being repeated with regard to NHS trusts.

European Regional Development Fund

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As at the end of November 1990, the total commitments secured for Scotland from the European regional development fund for the years 1975 to 1990 stood at £953 million.

Mr. Knox: Can my hon. Friend say how that compares with other EC countries?

Mr. Stewart: I can reassure my hon. Friend on that point, because Scotland's share compares extremely favourably with that of other members of the Community. For example, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) knows, EC statistics show that Scotland has secured more than six times as much regional fund commitment as Denmark. That shows how well the present arrangements are serving Scotland.

Mr. Beggs: I congratulate the Minister on his appointment. Will he take the earliest opportunity to visit Larne harbour in my constituency, where European regional development fund grants have helped in the provision of terminal facilities and have enabled us to cope with 322,000 commercial vehicles and 300,000 passenger-accompanied vehicles annually? That large number of ro-ro vehicles is using the Larne-Stranraer corridor. Will he seek further grant aid to provide matching facilities for passengers and freight transport on the Scottish mainland?

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his welcome, and what he says is interesting. I must admit that I am not fully acquainted with all the details that he has given, but I will acquaint myself with them and be in touch.

New Town Development Corporations

16. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairmen of the Scottish new towns development corporations to discuss the timetable for wind-up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I last met the chairmen of the Scottish new towns on 14 December 1990. The timetable for wind-up remains as stated in the Government's White Paper, "The Scottish New Towns: The Way Ahead".

Mr. Ingram: Is the Secretary of State aware that what the 42,000 tenants of the new towns want for Christmas is the right to choose the district council at the time of wind-up? Will he take that into consideration and give them that choice when the time comes?

Mr. Lang: The choice of many new town tenants in recent years has been to move from tenancy home ownership and that may well continue. What is important is not to foreclose on any options at present. We have not ruled out the possibility of transfer to the district council at a later date, but we think that the matter should be decided nearer the end of wind-up rather than now.

Pittenweem Harbour

17. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received in the last 12 months about the future of Pittenweem harbour.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Two people have written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about Pittenweem harbour.

Mr. Campbell: Does the Minister understand the great uncertainty being created in the fishing industry in my constituency as a result of the absence of concrete proposals for the improvement of Pittenweem harbour, particularly with regard to safety and the hygiene requirements that will be imposed after 1992? Will the Secretary of State take a direct interest in the matter and ensure an early resolution of the problem so that the fishing industry in my constituency will have a proper opportunity to continue to provide the service that it provides for the community at large?

Mr. Forsyth: My right hon. Friend's predecessor as Secretary of State visited Pittenweem in November and met representatives of the fishing industry and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State also plans a visit in the near future. As the hon. and learned Gentleman will know, the proposed scheme is ambitious and costly, and the regional council has been asked to review it with a view to presenting rather more viable plans.

Self-governing Hospitals

18. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications or expressions of interest have been made for hospitals and other national health service units to change to self-governing status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been four expressions of interest in NHS trust status.

Mr. Canavan: How can the Minister possibly justify the proposals of the Royal Scottish National hospital management team, most of whom have no first-hand experience of patient care, especially when those proposals have been resoundingly rejected by 96 per cent. of the staff and by virtually all the patients' relatives who have written to or contacted me to express their concern about the threat to mentally handicapped patients? They surely deserve the security and continuity of funding which can best be guaranteed by keeping the hospital fully integrated with the national health service under the existing arrangements.

Mr. Forsyth: I do not know how it is possible for people to reject proposals that have yet to be forthcoming. The hon. Gentleman is wrong to seek to cause anxiety about the quality of care for mentally handicapped people in his constituency and to misrepresent the proposals as coming only from management. They have come from management and also from all the consultants concerned, because they believe that by going for NHS trust status they will be

able to improve the quality of care. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, I would want to study the proposals in detail before reaching a conclusion on whether they are the right ones.

Mr. Doran: The Minister seemed to indicate in his reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that there was a recommendation from staff at the Foresterhill site —one of the four hospitals to which he referred—that that hospital should adopt the course of opting out. The Minister is well aware that the widespread opposition in Aberdeen includes medical staff in the hospital, but it is widely believed that they have changed their opinion because of the carrot dangled by the Scottish Office of extra money or special funding arrangements to meet shortfalls and the pressing need for capital. Will the Minister confirm what special financial or other arrangements have been offered to hospitals opting out?

Mr. Forsyth: No special arrangements have been offered to anyone, other than those set out in our White Paper and in our working documents on NHS trust status. As more and more people in the health service identify the benefits that will come from being involved in decision making at a local level and from resources being allocated according to their priorities—as opposed to priorities set by the people above them, at health board or Scottish Office level—they are increasingly considering trust status as a way of enabling them to continue the very professional and capable job that they do. I urge the hon. Gentleman to study carefully the proposals presented by Foresterhill. I understand that two parallel proposals have been developed, one involving continued direct management by the health board and the other involving self-governing status. I am sure that they will be evaluated on the basis of which will provide the best deal for patients in Aberdeen, and that is right and proper.

Rented Housing

19. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance he will give to councils in Scotland that wish to build more houses for rent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Provisional capital allocations of £415 million for local authority investment in council housing in 1991-92 were announced earlier this month. Authorities wishing to use those resources to build council houses are free to do so.

Mr. Graham: When right hon. and hon. Members leave the House today, we shall return to nice, comfortable homes, plenty of money and probably a good Christmas turkey, but will the Minister acknowledge that many thousands of homeless people are suffering the consequences of the Government's disastrous housing policy in respect of rented accommodation? When will the Minister stand up and be counted and ensure that the homeless can get a place to stay or a decent home at an affordable rent? It is up to you, Minister, to give them some hope.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, some confirmation of the problem was given by the director of housing of Glasgow district council, who is quoted in today's *Glasgow Herald* as saying that some

"9,000 council homes are empty in Glasgow district".

He suggested that the figure could increase to 20,000. I suggest to the House that those houses should be brought back into use. If the council feels that it does not have sufficient resources, it should consider making arrangements with housing associations, or with the private sector, to bring them back into use. I strongly endorse what the director of housing of Glasgow district council has said in that regard.

No one should be under any obligation to sleep rough. The Salvation Army has confirmed that places are available in hostels in Edinburgh and Glasgow if those concerned wish to take up the offer.

Local Government Finance

20. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the review of the operation of the poll tax in Scotland to be completed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The timetable for the review of the community charge is under consideration.

Mr. McAllion: Did the Minister read the report in Monday's *Financial Times*, which said that the Government's own civil servants favour a return to the old rating system, with a staged transfer of education from local to central Government? Is that report accurate and, if so, will the Minister support its application in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: I do not comment on newspaper reports —*[Interruption.]*—necessarily. However, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the hon. Member for Eastwood well remembers rating revaluation in Scotland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Later.

Mr. Dalyell: It arises out of questions.

Mr. Speaker: That may be so, but I will take points of order arising out of questions, or any other points of order, after the statement.

Horn of Africa (Aid)

3.31 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about famine relief for the horn of Africa.

Last week, we received the preliminary findings from missions which the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation mounted to Ethiopia and to Sudan, to assess the 1990 crop situation, and predict the likely food needs in 1991. The reports make it clear that the outlook for the horn in 1991 is of the gravest concern. There have been serious crop failures in both countries, compounded by civil war. The horn is facing a famine at least as bad as the 1984-85 disaster, when upwards of 1 million people died. In 1991, as many as 10 million people could be at risk of starvation.

On our present information, Sudan and Ethiopia are likely to be the worst hit countries, but Somalia could suffer, too. There are similar problems in all three countries, but there are also important differences. Government intransigence in Sudan makes famine relief difficult. Widespread violence and disorder in Somalia makes any relief effort difficult to mount. We will continue to provide humanitarian assistance for both countries where we can find effective ways of doing so, but we must also continue to press these Governments to assume their responsibilities.

In Ethiopia, we have pressed all sides to respond positively to the renewed crisis. The Government and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front have announced their agreement to reopen the port of Massawa to food shipments made under United Nations auspices. This is a major step forward, enabling us to provide relief more efficiently to people in Eritrea, including the Asmara area; and possibly also to Tigray. It was not an easy decision for either side. We should congratulate them. The House knows that the only long-term solution to Ethiopia's problem is to end the war. The peace process is progressing slowly. I hope that, if Massawa reopens, as agreed yesterday, it will signal a new effort by all sides to reach a just and lasting settlement.

However, peace cannot come in time to solve the problems of this year's failed harvest. I know that hon. Members will agree that we must help to avoid a repeat of the catastrophe that we saw in 1984-85. We are certainly better prepared and informed than we were then. My Department has been monitoring the situation closely, and earlier today I held one of my regular meetings with British non-governmental organisations to discuss the crisis.

We have already provided £23 million emergency aid for Ethiopia and Sudan so far this year, and £56 million since the beginning of 1989. The British Government were among the first to respond to early indications of food shortages in the two countries by providing £5 million since October for food aid and transport. The FAO reports indicate a much greater need ahead which will need to be met through a major international relief effort.

I have decided to make a further £5 million available immediately from the Overseas Development Administration's existing reserves for the two countries as the Government's first contribution to this effort. Most of the new emergency relief aid will be channelled through British non-governmental organisations, with which we are in close contact. I have been talking to them today about the most effective way of spending the money. It will help to buy food and medical supplies, and vehicles to transport them to the needy. We will also make some funds available for international relief agencies. I stress that this is our immediate response to the emergency. We are ready to provide more help as the relief requirements become clearer. I intend to visit Ethiopia next month to see the situation for myself at first hand, and I shall go prepared to provide more emergency aid.

The British Government have played a leading role in mobilising a new relief effort for the horn, but we cannot possibly hope to tackle all the problems on our own. I have already encouraged my colleagues in the European Community to follow our lead. I hope that, over the coming months, they, the countries themselves and the international community will come together in a partnership which will help the desperate people in this famine-stricken region.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On many occasions over the past few months, the Opposition have been extremely critical—and rightly so—of the Government's overseas development policy. On this occasion, however, and not simply because we have entered the season of good will to all humankind, we congratulate the Minister on her rapid response to the serious famine in the horn of Africa.

None of us can forget the horrific pictures shown on television during the 1984-85 famine, when at least 1 million people in the horn starved to death. We never want to see similar scenes again. It is, however, clear from estimates by both the United Nations and the voluntary organisations that a famine on a similar scale is now looming. The Minister's decision to provide £5 million immediately for Ethiopia and the Sudan is, of course, welcome, as is her assurance that it is the first and immediate response to the emergency, and that more help may be in the pipeline.

I am sure that the Minister will join me in hoping that, when the Disasters Emergency Committee launches an appeal in January, the British public will once again demonstrate their tremendous concern and generosity. It is clear, however, that much more will need to be done. In the disastrous year of 1985, the United Kingdom Government gave £28 million to Ethiopia in emergency relief—equivalent to £36 million in today's prices. Does the Minister agree that that effort must be not only matched but exceeded this time?

I share the Minister's view that the Sudanese Government are intransigent; they are also callous and ruthless. But the voluntary agencies can reach the starving people, and donors should therefore do everything possible to support their work. Does the Minister agree that the donors must not withhold emergency aid, however much they wish to change the policies of the Government concerned? Changing those policies will be a long-term process, and the hungry cannot wait.

As for Ethiopia, I welcome today's news that agreement has been reached to reopen the port of Massawa. That is an event for which all of us have waited for many months. As the transporting of food to people in Eritrea and Tigray is particularly difficult and expensive, will the Minister say what aid her Department plans to give towards the cost of transport?

May I remind the Minister that, in addition to the Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, an estimated 4·5 million

people in Mozambique, Angola and Liberia are also in desperate need of food aid. May we expect a statement on those countries early in the new year?

I agree with the Minister that in the long term only an end to the bitter conflicts that have raged in so much of Africa will enable the people to feed themselves. In the meantime, however, there is so much that donors can and should do. Did we not prove last year, when famine was averted, that the international response can be very effective? Although world attention has been focused on eastern Europe and the Gulf, it is essential that we do not ignore Africa.

This year the challenge is even greater, but, to put it in perspective, the cost of British forces in the Gulf is running at £24 million each week. That is more than Ethiopia and the Sudan have been given in total by the Overseas Development Administration this year. It is less than they will need over the months ahead.

Finally, will the Minister continue to keep us informed about Africa's food needs and about the Government's response, as the need arises, by making further similar statements in the House?

Mrs. Chalker: I begin by thanking the hon. Lady for welcoming my statement. There is absolutely no doubt about the immediate needs or about what we have to do to respond to them. I have already told the Disasters Emergency Committee that it will have my fullest backing when it makes its appeal to the British public on 8 January.

The hon. Lady referred to the position in Ethiopia in 1985. We shall certainly at least match what we did that year. However, we have done a great deal more work between the disaster of 1984-85 and the one that now faces us, as the figure of £56 million that has been spent in the last two years in Ethiopia and Sudan—without taking into account today's announcement—clearly shows. What we have to do is use every diplomatic effort that we can, although the Government of Sudan listen to no one and do not admit the size of the disaster that faces their people.

I agree with the hon. Lady that we should seek to get the food through, but a logistical problem faces the non-governmental organisations. Even with the welcome reopening of the port of Massawa, cross-border help will be needed to get food into Ethiopia. The areas of Sudan that are most badly affected—northern Darfur, northern Kordofan and the Red sea hills area—will also need a great deal of help. The Government of Sudan may prevent the non-governmental organisations from doing what they want to do and what we are prepared to pay for. We have to face that fact.

As for the hon. Lady's questions about Liberia, Mozambique and Angola, we have already given £2 million to Liberia this year, including the money to the Save the Children Fund that was announced yesterday by the fund as special help for the refugees. I took help with me when I went to see Liberian refugees in Ghana. We have given further help to Sierra Leone, which is looking after the Liberian refugees as a result of the war.

In addition to the money that I have announced for Ethiopia and the Sudan, later I shall be making an announcement about £1 million of aid for the Mozambiquan refugees who are in Malawi, a further £500,000 worth of food aid for Mozambique and £700,000 worth of food aid for Angola. Those countries also need our help. I assure the hon. Lady that they are not forgotten. However, the horn of Africa problem is very much more serious than the problem in all those other countries—although, of course, every starving person needs our help.

We have been giving help over the years and we shall continue to do what we can, but I would welcome all the help that we can get from our European Community partners and from multilateral donors to ensure that this is a worldwide effort and that it saves the lives of 10 million people.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): I strongly support what my right hon. Friend has said and all that she is doing to tackle the threat of this appalling and ghastly tragedy in the horn of Africa. I agree with the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) about how crucial it is not to forget Africa at this time. Is my right hon. Friend fully satisfied that the machinery for co-operation in the Sudan and Ethiopia is satisfactory? She will no doubt recall that in the 1984-85 famine getting effective machinery of co-operation going was of paramount importance, and in due course I think that that was achieved. Is she satisfied that that is already in place, and does she believe that there is anything more that we, the European Community or the international community can do to bring pressure to bear to end these appalling and ceaseless civil wars in the two countries?

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his welcome for the statement; I know how much he did in 1984-85. We are aware that the machinery for co-operation in Ethiopia has improved this year, because in March we worked together to establish the southern relief line, which has saved some lives in Tigray and southern Eritrea this year. I hope that the Government of Ethiopia and the Eritreans and Tigrayans will work together, but we shall need constantly to work with them to ensure that that does not break down. Whether it be bringing food in through Massawa or a continued use of the southern relief route, both will need working at.

I am afraid that the situation in Sudan is very much worse. Operation Lifeline in Sudan is almost non-workable at present. That is one reason why I am so downhearted about how much we shall be able to do, despite our willingness to help the people of Sudan.

There is more that the Community can do and I shall be in touch with the Commissioner for Development about getting food aid released more quickly from the Community. I shall ask my colleagues in the United Nations and in other countries to bring what diplomatic pressure they can to bear, particularly on the Government of Sudan, to bring this tragedy in their country to an end.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): The Minister has given the House a most sombre statement. I thank her for her immediate response and for the leadership that she is giving by trying to encourage the European Community to do more and by her visit to the area next month.

What is the Minister's response to the points that I made in Friday's debate—that the public, who responded generously to the Live Aid appeal five years ago, will look with horror at these conditions recurring? What has been done in the long term, first, to take an initiative at the United Nations to stop the supply of arms to Africa, without which these civil wars could not continue, and,

[Sir David Steel]

secondly, to supply technical assistance and personnel to develop irrigation, schemes, particularly in this part of Africa, and drought-resistant crops?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his comments. The long term will be possible only when war ceases. I have spoken to United Nations representatives on many occasions about trying to bring peace to the area. Bilaterally, many other Governments of the same view as us are also trying to do that. When I was in Ethiopia in March, I spent quite a long time with the Soviet ambassador and spoke to my American colleague. There is no doubt that everybody who is involved in Ethiopia is trying to achieve an end to the war. The difficulty in Sudan is, first, that we cannot get to people who might make that decision and, secondly, that they are not listening to what the international community or bilateral donors are saying.

I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about the importance of irrigation, and we hope to be able to mount an effort on such projects. Until the war ceases in both those countries, however, I am afraid that we are in a desperate situation.

Mr. Richard Luce (Shoreham): I, too, warmly welcome the prompt action of my right hon. Friend. Is not it a devastating condemnation of the Government's of Ethiopia and Sudan that the aid is coming from the outside world despite the existence of those Governments and despite the obstacles that they have put up? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that the outside world should realise that those Governments are doing absolutely nothing to help their people?

Mrs. Chalker: It is certainly true that the Government of Sudan are doing absolutely nothing to help, but some progress has been made in Ethiopia. I do not believe that enough has been done because there is still a military stalemate, but at least there are signs that that Government are prepared to talk.

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks. We have been active in trying to secure peace in Ethiopia, as have the Arab countries. Although Ethiopia is moving away from its former Marxist-Leninist ideology, there has been little real political reform and there is a long way to go. However, at least that Government are seeking to co-operate in this humanitarian effort and, on the back of that, I hope that we shall get the peace process moving once again. The United States has sponsored talks in the past and I hope that we may have another round of talks early in the new year.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Although the Minister's personal efforts are appreciated, how can she equate the statement that 10 million people are facing starvation with her statement that we are giving only a further £5 million? Surely the extent of the action does not match the need and the Treasury should be told that in forthright terms. The Minister spoke of aid increasing when the relief requirements are better known; thus she implied that she does not know those relief requirements now. Surely she already knows those requirements.

Mrs. Chalker: The £5 million is in addition to the £56 million that we have already given to Ethiopia and Sudan in the past two years. I also made it clear that the non-governmental organisations will be able to use that amount for transport, drugs and food in the near future. As the situation evolves, we shall be able to assess what else is needed. Today, however, I would be wrong to commit other moneys until we have more information than we have yet been able to receive. However, I thought it wrong that the House should rise for Christmas without at least informing it of the major crop failure in Ethiopia and Sudan and of the first steps that we shall take in 1991 to deal with it.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): My right hon. Friend mentioned that the European Community countries may help. Surely this is a classic example of where the rich European Community should spearhead the effort.

Mrs. Chalker: We want to encourage the EC to assist. There is absolutely no doubt, however, that those of us who have staff on the ground can help the NGOs, which are likely to be more effective. I hope that the EC will soon reappoint its delegate to Khartoum, who has been absent for more than six months.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Minister will be aware that the people of Northern Ireland are extremely concerned about overseas development aid and the particular needs of the horn of Africa. Therefore, on their behalf, I welcome the realistic statement and the practical steps that are now being taken. Bearing in mind the fact that getting food to the places of real need poses a problem, has any consideration been given to extending the "days of tranquillity" scheme operated by UNICEF, which prevailed upon people to allow inoculation and immunisation programmes to be carried out? If Governments co-operated in such a way, is it possible that immediate aid could reach those places of real need?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for welcoming the statement. We have worked with UNICEF, but that is only one way of helping. We need to use every possible channel if we are to avert this disaster. That is why I have worked with the British, as well as the international NGOs to seek to obtain food and medicine and the necessary transport to take them to where people are suffering.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): May I add my welcome for my right hon. Friend's statement? Does she recall that we have long and historic links with the Sudanese people? She will no doubt agree that the decline of that nation and the continuing civil war in that country is a terrible tragedy for all the people involved. Will she alert United Nations opinion and opinion in countries such as Saudi Arabia to the need to put pressure on the Sudanese Government to facilitate the passage of emergency supplies to southern Sudan and the disposal of those supplies in a reliable manner?

Mrs. Chalker: We shall do all that we can with not only the United Nations but other nations which may have influence over Sudan. However, in Sudan there is a fundamental regime with a poor record on human rights which is deteriorating even further. The fundamentalists seem to be strengthening their position, and the security situation is extremely serious. I could say many other things about Sudan, but for the purpose of my statement

I shall say only that we shall try to get food to the starving people of that country as well as trying to bring about peace in some way.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Minister assure the House that, if during the recess it is necessary to add to the funding that she announced today, she will do so? Will she clarify whether the extra funds are new money or whether money has been taken from some other aspect of the overseas aid budget? She mentioned Angola. Can she report to the House on whether any progress has been made in the talks with UNITA? Clearly, the war in Angola is no more helpful than war anywhere else.

As, sadly, what the Minister outlined today was both predictable and predicted, can she confirm that the Government will struggle for a long-term solution to the appalling, recurring problems?

Mrs. Chalker: The money comes from my aid budget, from funds specially allowed for disasters such as this. However, if I have to resort to the unallocated reserve for more money, I shall take the decision to do so. With starving people at risk, I did not want to wait for the House to return before making a decision. As a Minister, it is my responsibility to make a decision and inform hon. Members as quickly as possible.

Although Angola is outside the terms of the statement, I can inform the hon. Gentleman that progress has been made. United States and Soviet Foreign Ministers' representatives hope that we may work towards peace in that country before too long.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The agreement to open the port of Massawa is certainly good news. Have British diplomatic initiatives to President Mengistu helped to bring about that and other improvements?

Mrs. Chalker: I spent almost three hours with President Mengistu in March this year. I was at least able to establish some of the essentials of what feeding a starving nation would mean if we were faced with famine, as we now are. A few weeks ago I was in touch with him again specifically to discuss the port of Massawa. Although I in no way claim to have changed his mind, the pressure from British diplomats, myself and other members of the European Community, whom I alerted to the need to take such action, will have helped.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Will the Minister give us an assurance that the welcome pledge of assistance is not merely a one-off Christmas gesture and that she will do everything possible to ensure the continuity of funding for emergency famine relief and long-term development projects? In Ethiopia alone, over 4 million people depend on emergency relief to supply them for the coming year. It is deplorable that the British Government are still a long way from achieving the United Nations' target of spending 0·7 per cent. of our gross national product on aid and development.

Mrs. Chalker: Funding for humanitarian aid is quite secure and we shall do what is necessary. Long-term development aid to the Sudan will not continue, because we simply cannot operate a system of development aid while that country is at war. We hope that there will soon be peace in Ethiopia and that we shall be able to do something further to help. Rather than simply pouring in humanitarian aid, we hope to do something in the long term which may prevent that from being necessary. Throughout a period involving cycles of drought and therefore famine, we must rely on the Governments of the countries concerned to realise that they cannot always be bailed out by the rest of the world. Until they bring peace in their countries, no one—with the best will in the world—can protect all those people from starvation.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): To what extent is the human rights record of the countries concerned taken into account in determining humanitarian aid? In that connection, does my right hon. Friend acknowledge the value of strong economies in the region in creating a locomotive effect that helps other countries? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that she will continue her aid programme to Kenya, which has shown a considerable improvement in its human rights record over the past few months?

Mrs. Chalker: Wherever countries pursue a sensible economic reform programme, there is a spin-off for neighbouring countries. That is very welcome and we seek to reward it in our general development programme. That applies to Kenya and to many other countries in Africa—22 in all—which have structural adjustment programmes. We seek to give humanitarian aid irrespective of the behaviour of the Government, and I believe that to be right. We are stopping development aid to Sudan not only because we cannot deliver it but because that country has one of the worst human rights records in the region.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I warmly welcome the announcement today, but will the right hon. Lady direct her attention and that of her fellow Ministers in the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to early-day motion 252, which appears on the Order Paper for the first time today? Is not it true that developed countries are contributing to the long-term problems in the underdeveloped world by selling arms there? The early-day motion calls for an international crusade to put a stop to the sale of arms to such countries because it distorts their economies and results not only in casualties on the battlefield but in millions of people starving throughout the world. Will the right hon. Lady consider closing the Defence Export Services Organisation, which not only sells arms to those countries but encourages arms sales above the sale of other export materials?

Mrs. Chalker: I know for a fact that the organisation mentioned in the early-day motion does not export arms to either of the two countries to which we are referring today. I note the motion, but I also note, as I have said many times, that until the countries agree to find a way to peace—that means stopping the import of arms—the horrendous problems that they now face will not cease.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I thank my right hon. Friend for her prompt action and her statement, and welcome the co-operation which is emerging in Ethiopia. I wish to concentrate on the Sudan. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite the intransigence of the Sudanese Government, many of our non-governmental organisations, which continue to work there under difficult circumstances, have established excellent relationships with regional government, village councils and people on the ground? We need efforts—whether by the international agencies, the United Nations or other Arab and African

[Mr. Jim Lester]

countries—to persuade the Sudanese Government that the well-tried method of feeding people through NGOs is in no way undermining their authority but the best possible way in which we can serve the people whom they, too, are supposed to serve?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I sincerely hope that the efforts of the regional Governments in backing the non-governmental organisations to feed the people of Sudan will succeed. It is a matter of persuading the Government of Sudan not to interfere, stop the supplies of food and fuel, or stop transport routes. We must use diplomatic efforts with the Government of Sudan. I was pleased to welcome our ambassador from Khartoum to our briefing meeting today with the NGOs so that he could hear from them at first hand and talk to them. We shall do all that we can, but I think my hon. Friend knows the limitations of the position in Sudan, however hard we and the NGOs try.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I congratulate the Minister on her swift response to the report of the Food and Agriculture Organisation and on the research of her civil servants. But the FAO report refers to 10 million people at risk. Does it refer to a cash estimate of the total amount of aid required to secure the future of the people in the horn of Africa? Does it give no figure at all?

Mrs. Chalker: I do not have the report with me and am unable to give the exact reference at present. There is no specific recommendation—that is not the way the FAO works. The report contains a request to the whole international community and all donor Governments, not simply to the British Government. We shall play our role in providing money and food, and helping the NGOs to deliver them. We shall also play a political role, but other countries must help—it cannot all be left to Britain.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): It goes without saying that I welcome this afternoon's statement, but will the Minister say something further about distribution? She will be aware that nothing discourages public generosity more than pictures and stories of aid piled up high, not reaching the people whom it is meant to help. Is she able closely to monitor distribution in those countries and what plans does she have to ensure that the British public is aware of how effective the aid is being because that is the best way to encourage them to be even more generous?

Mrs. Chalker: I fully understand what my hon. Friend is saying. We have to rely on the world food programme and the NGO officials to monitor developments and ensure that the food gets to its intended recipients. They have done so successfully in the intervening period since the last famine, and I have every confidence of their being able to do so in the future. We could not achieve that as a Government ourselves, but we shall seek to ensure that there are not only adequate, but reported assessments of the food getting to the people. We must ensure that those reports are made known in this country and to other public donors.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Government have a cheek to talk about peace in the horn of Africa when, only a couple of thousand miles away in the middle east, they are preparing for war and are going to spend millions of pounds to carry it out. The Government should use all the time, energy and resources that they are spending in the Gulf to help the poor in the horn of Africa and elsewhere. If the conflagration takes place in the Gulf after January, the total spent there will be even higher. Why does not the Minister tell people in the Common Market that, instead of pottering about with single currencies and all the rest, they should carry out the terms of Lomé convention to feed the third world? That would be better than piling up the surpluses and burning them. Why not feed the people instead of using guns?

Mrs. Chalker: There is absolutely no way in which food in the Community that can be used—I emphasise the word "can"—for the people of Ethiopia and Sudan will not be so used. Any Government, like the Government of Sudan, who are prepared to back to the hilt the man, and the Government, who invaded Kuwait need to look at their own countries and people first. We shall do all that we can to achieve peace in the countries under discussion this afternoon and find a peaceful means of withdrawal from Kuwait by the Government of Iraq.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I thank my right hon. Friend for her thoroughly positive statement and her personally constructive role in bringing relief to the hard-pressed countries of the horn of Africa. When she goes to Ethiopia, and if she sees the Soviet ambassador, will she make it clear that it is unacceptable for the Soviet Union to supply arms to the Government of Ethiopia, particularly to maintain the Soviet-equipped Ethiopian air force? There is little point in supplying aid to the miserable people of the Tigray and Eritrea one day if they are to have the life bombed out of them the next by the Soviet-equipped Ethiopian air force.

Mrs. Chalker: I spoke about this matter in March with the Soviet ambassador, but it is not just a question of arms from the Soviet Union. The Ethiopian Government have been purchasing them from other places, and arms have gone to the Eritreans and to the Tigrayans to further their struggle for independence. Until we can proceed with the talks that the United States has started on Ethiopia, I fear that we shall not persuade one nation to stop supplying arms. All nations must stop supplying them.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on yet again ensuring that British emergency aid relief gets through as urgently as possible. Is it not true that changing the policies of Ethiopia need not be a long-term process, as suggested by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), even if the effects of such a change might be long term? Does my right hon. Friend agree that change by the Governments in this area is necessary, and particularly by the Ethiopian Government whose socialist policies have brought the country's economy to bankruptcy and given it a disgraceful human rights record?

Mrs. Chalker: We have said as much as we can about the need for change by the Government of Ethiopia and the Government of Sudan, not only in their economic management but in the way in which they treat their people. They are about as far away from good government as any Government could be. We shall do what we can. We shall make our views known and we will encourage others who share them to make theirs known, too. The essential

job before us is to galvanise the whole international community and other bilateral donors into getting their donations and food organised quickly, with the help of the non-governmental organisations, particularly those from this country, so as to save 10 million people from starving.

Arts Funding (England)

4.11 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Tim Renton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the structure of arts funding in England.

On 13 March my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), whom I am delighted to see in his place, announced to the House a series of structural changes in the system of arts funding that had evolved since the foundation of the Arts Council. A cardinal change was a national strategic role for the Arts Council. I shall look to the Arts Council to develop, for the first time, a comprehensive national arts strategy, which will give us clear ideas and goals for the arts throughout the 1990s and into the new century. I expect to receive this by the summer of 1992.

The Arts Council's new role was accompanied by a substantial transfer of responsibility for funding regional clients to a smaller number of new incorporated regional arts boards, with fewer members representing a wider range of interests throughout the region. The new boards would account to the Arts Council through a new system of planning, budgeting and monitoring.

The purpose of the reforms was better co-ordination of overall funding policy and strengthened regional accountability for large and growing sums of public money so as to get the best value for the arts and for the taxpayer who supports them. Their ultimate objective is to help the arts, in all their forms, to flourish throughout the country, and to create a closer relationship between the regional art organisations and the soil from which they spring.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) subsequently proposed and consulted widely on a number of additional changes designed to ensure that the new boards could discharge their enlarged responsibilities effectively and so maintain and enhance high standards of arts provision.

In the light of advice from the Arts Council on these additional changes, and on the transfer of funding responsibilities, and after meeting local authority and regional representatives, I have now reviewed the overall process of reform and propose to take it forward in the following ways.

I fully support the aims and direction of the reforms, including the principle of significant delegation of responsibility for funding regional clients to the new boards. The general criteria for determining this delegation, agreed by the Arts Council in June, are also a sensible starting point for further work. At the same time, I recognise the force of the concerns of some arts organisations about the transfer of their funding to bodies not yet in place and which will need a proper period to become fully established. It is essential that the reforms have the confidence of all whose interests the funding system exists to serve, consumer, artist and taxpayer alike. I have therefore decided that it would be prudent for delegation to take place in stages.

The initial stage of delegation will go ahead as planned from 1 April 1992, and I have asked the Arts Council to advise me by 1 April 1991 what scale of delegation would then be appropriate. By October 1992, the Arts Council will advise me on the scale and timing of further delegation. An important benefit of staging in this way will be that later decisions can be informed by progress in the

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development of the new national arts strategy. I wish to see the regional arts boards playing the fullest possible part in this development.

No less importantly, it will also enable me to satisfy myself, as I must, that the new boards will have the capacity to take on further responsibilities, that there will be a reduction in the administration costs of the system as a whole, that high standards of arts provision will be maintained, and that the new system will provide a mechanism that will enable ever higher standards to be achieved.

In response to the report of the review team established by the Arts Council, I have taken further decisions as follows. The governing boards of the new RABs should be as small as possible, within a range of 12 to 18 members. In exceptional circumstances, however, I will consider boards of no more than 24 members. I have decided that a maximum of one third of the places should be reserved for local authority nominees. I am content for local authorities to select these as best suits regional circumstances. Other board members will be selected by a panel of regional and Arts Council representatives, and their appointments will require Arts council approval. The chairmen of boards will be selected in a similar way, but these important appointments will also require my consent. Senior executives will sit on boards at regional discretion but within the limits on the size of boards that I have already described. I have also endorsed the idea of more widely representative consultative forums for local authority and other regional interests which may form an integral part of the new RAB company structures.

In all other respects, changes already announced will go ahead. This includes the merger of a number of the existing regional bodies, and I warmly welcome the good progress that they are making in achieving this. The new boards should be in place by no later than 1 October 1991. I have asked the Arts Council and the regional arts authorities to undertake an urgent review of the staffing needs and costs of the new system and to report to me by April 1991. I have today written to the chairman of the Arts Council setting out my decisions in greater detail, and a copy of my letter has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

My overriding objective in making these further changes is to ensure that the new regional boards are balanced and effective for the tasks that they will have to perform, paying due regard to the need for regional backgrounds and involvement, more effective accountability, value for money and, most important, continued high standards of arts provision. The structure and strategy of arts funding play an important part in the enhancement of the creative spirit in all its forms. In deciding these reforms, I have thought of the needs of both artist and the public and of our ultimate goal—encouragement of artistic excellence at every level in every area.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I welcome much of the approach of the Minister's statement and some of its content. In particular, the arts will be reassured that the Minister will not pursue the centralised tendencies of his immediate predecessor but will allow local authorities and regional arts boards considerably more say in regional representation. It was quite wrong for the former Minister to seek personally to appoint the chairmen of regional arts boards, and the Minister has been wise to reject that route.

However, I am extremely critical of the Minister's attitude towards the delegation of arts clients. By opting for a phased two stage delegation of clients, the Minister may feel that he is being cautious and pragmatic, but he is wrong. He is creating a two-tier system of clients for the immediate future. Some will be funded centrally and they will be seen as first division clients. Those who are funded regionally will be seen as second-division clients. That will divide and demoralise the arts world, and be extremely counter-productive.

Did the Minister consult on this? If he did, whom did he consult? Why did he ignore the explicit advice of the Arts Council, which recently heard 30 appeals against delegation, and rejected all of them with one exception? He should have taken that advice because the Arts Council, unlike him, understands the dangers of a two-tier system. More crucially, why has he not provided a list of delegated companies to the House? By announcing a two-tier system and not telling hon. Members and the companies they represent who will and who will not be delegated he is stoking up anger and confusion.

Will the Minister place that list of delegated client companies in the Library at once? If he does not do so, hon. Members will not know whether the Belgrade theatre, Coventry, or the West Yorkshire playhouse or the Theatre Royal in York will be delegated. Will they be first or second-tier? Hon. Members on both sides of the House have a right to tell their constituents the implications of the

The Minister has not told the House what the financial implications of his statement will be. He referred to a reduction in administrative cuts, but he should know that the £2 million saving originally envisaged by Mr. Richard Wilding in his report has long since disappeared and everyone in the arts world estimates that it will cost an extra £2 million to implement his reorganisation strategy, and that that money will have to come from top slicing arts clients.

The confidence of those regional clients in the Government's seriousness about devolution and delegation will be dented not only by the Minister's reluctance to say who will and who will not be delegated but by the Art Council's announcement yesterday of grants and the dispersal of the enhancement funds, welcome though those moneys are. Some national companies did well. The Royal Shakespeare Company will be able to close the gap in its deficit, although not eliminate it. Some did badly—the South Bank will have a 5 per cent. cut in real terms. Other organisations did well only at the expense of regional companies.

Some theatres appear to have got nothing at all. They include both theatres in Liverpool, the Theatre Royal in Plymouth, the Lyric theatre, Hammersmith, the Crucible in Sheffield and the Northern Ballet theatre. Some have had cuts, including the Northern Stage Company, with a cut of 20 per cent., and the Scottish Opera touring branch, with a cut of 11 per cent. There is a serious threat to the Welsh National Opera touring company, a point that my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State for Wales will be pursuing. Others have had cuts in real terms, such as the Theatre Royal in Manchester, and the New Victoria theatre in my constituency.

How can we take the Minister's welcome words about delegation seriously when we see the list? Is this the financial reality of his statement—more money to the centre, less to the regions, and nothing to the community

arts or to theatre in education? In the regions, the arts policies of local authorities are being butchered by the poll tax and by poll tax capping.

Although the Minister's remarks about recognising local authority importance are welcome, he has failed to pin local authorities financially into his statement. He appears to be penalising those which are already being poll tax capped because they cannot match Arts Council funding. Will he understand at this late stage that what he was reported as saying in *The Times* the other day was right? Local authorities should have a statutory responsibility for arts funding and therefore attract and be eligible for revenue support grants. If he ensured that, his words on delegation would have some real substance.

We welcome the Minister's attitude against centralisation and we welcome what he said about delegation, but until he gives us the list and improves the financial context in which it is happening, the House will have severe reservations about his statement today.

Mr. Renton: Oh dear, oh dear. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) was so anxious to be indignant about something that I feel he did not listen attentively to my statement. I shall start at the beginning. Let me make it plain: there is no current list of clients of the Arts Council who are to be delegated. I made it abundantly plain that I asked the council to produce a first list for me by April 1991. I repeat: there is no current list.

Of course there was consultation. I consulted the chairman and the secretary general of the Arts Council. I consulted representatives of the regional arts associations and representatives of local authorities. I mentioned that in my statement.

I disagree with the suggestion of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central that there will be division between those who are on the first list, when that is announced after it is given to me by the Arts Council by April 1991, and those who will be deferred for further consideration on a second list, and that that will lead to demoralisation. Different criteria may apply. My right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce) made it plain when he made his statement earlier in the year that he accepted phased delegation and did not expect delegation to finish before the time scale which I have set.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was so anxious to wax angry that he did not listen to what I said about costs. I made it abundantly plain that I had asked for a report from the Arts Council to be given to me by 1 April 1991 on the costs of the new integrated system and of the new integrated staffing structure. That report is not yet available. That is one reason why I have decided today to apply the brakes and to proceed in the phased manner that I have described. I think that the entire House takes the view that the new regional arts boards should not be required to take on further responsibilities by delegation until they have ready the structure, staff and expertise to justify them being given that responsibility.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central talked about the enhancement fund. It is all too easy to pick out from the fund the names of the organisations which did not get any money. I could run through the list and give the names of those which did get money. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who is now the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, made it clear that he was establishing the fund—about £7 million for each of the next three years—he made it abundantly plain that it would not be available to all the clients of the Arts Council. He said that that could not possibly happen.

It is true that the Welsh National Opera company did not receive anything from the enhancement fund. Nor did the Royal National theatre and the South Bank. On the other hand, the Arts Council has announced an increase of 11 per cent. in 1991 for the WNO's touring expenses. Its grant will increase from £2·8 million to £3·1 million. The Welsh Arts Council announced this morning that from its enhancement fund of £410,000 it will make available £175,000 to the WNO. When those factors are considered together, I do not think that it is realistic to say that the WNO has been treated badly by the Arts Council.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Come on.

Mr. Renton: No, not at all. I insist that it is the Arts Council that decides on allocations to individual clients, not myself.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central appeared to be concerned that all the money was going to London. Fifty-one per cent. of enhancement fund moneys will go to Greater London and 49 per cent. to the regions. That is the same split as that which was made of the total Arts Council funding for English revenue clients for 1989-90.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to balance the interests of hon. Members who are waiting for the Christmas Adjournment and Consolidated Fund debates against the interests of hon. Members who are hoping to catch my eye now. I shall endeavour to call all hon. Members, but, as it appears that this will be a fairly long process, I must ask for single questions only. We will have to move on at 5 o'clock, irrespective of whether all hon. Members have been called. Whether or not I can call all hon. Members depends on the hon. Members concerned.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement. Will he invite the Arts Council to accept that symphony orchestras and concerts play a most important part in the cultural and artistic life of this country, and at least as important as opera? That applies to both London and provincial orchestras. Will my right hon. Friend comment on the position of the South Bank and the Royal Festival hall, as the home of symphony concerts in London and the south-east?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his supportive remarks. South Bank is to get a 5·5 per cent. revenue increase in the year ahead. I realise that that is disappointing for the South Bank management, but the decision was the Arts Council's not mine. However, there is good management at the South Bank, and it is making good progress in dealing with its deficit. I am told by the Arts Council that it hopes that that 5·5 per cent. increase will be sufficient to enable it to write off its deficit in the year ahead.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Is the Minister aware that he inherited a confused position, and that he has confounded it further by leaving until the summer of 1992 the point at which the Arts Council must produce its national strategy when it is clear that the Arts Council is having to produce a strategy now, and that it is

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one of cuts, especially in the funding of companies in the regions? The companies that have been dependent on regional arts association funding will be especially heavily hit by the proposals. How is that gap in time to be filled? Will it be filled by further closures of theatres throughout the country?

Mr. Renton: I am disappointed by the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will not mind my saying that I saw him in Glasgow at the new concert hall two weeks ago. Glasgow has been a magnificent example of successful arts programmes throughout the year. There has been a great revival in that city. A new concert hall has been built, and there have been more than 3,000 artistic performances in Glasgow this year. To talk in such dire and critical terms is unrealistic—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman represents a Scottish constituency, and I thought that he was talking about Scotland.

The Arts Council has received an increase of 13 per cent. in its funding from my Department this year. It will receive an increase of 11·5 per cent. in the year ahead, well above the expected rate of inflation. Because of that, the Arts Council was able yesterday to announce favourable decisions about the enhancement fund.

Mr. Richard Luce (Shoreham): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to pursue the principles of devolution of funding for the arts and a strengthening of accountability. Can he make it clear beyond doubt that the Arts Council will continue to have a singularly important role to play, especially in devising a national strategy for the arts, and that there will be no substantial further devolution until my right hon. Friend is satisfied about the standard and calibre of all the regional arts boards?

Mr. Renton: I thank my right hon. Friend for his support. I am aware that it was he who originally commissioned the Wilding report in 1988, which pointed us in this direction. Indeed, my right hon. Friend announced these reforms earlier this year.

I wholeheartedly agree with my right hon. Friend that the Arts Council should continue to have a central role, not least in developing a national arts strategy, the aim of which will be to set out our medium and long-term objectives for support of the arts, against the charted objectives of the Arts Council itself. That will be an important role for the Arts Council.

One of the reasons for the phasing of the delegation is to give me time to make certain that the new regional arts boards are capable, confident and properly staffed to take on further responsibilities before we ask major clients to move across to them.

Mr. Donald Coleman (Neath): Will the Minister confirm that, despite what he has said about the Welsh National Opera company, that part of the company's grant which is applied to touring in England is to be cut? Does not he realise the adverse effect that that will have on audiences so successfully built up in England and on the survival of the company? Will he seek to have the matter reopened by the Arts Council, to reassess the situation and to recognise the value of the Welsh National Opera company not only to Wales but to the whole of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Renton: I am delighted to give the hon. Gentleman the categoric assurance that he is wrong. I repeat, because the hon. Gentleman does not seem to have heard me, that the Arts Council of Great Britain has already announced an increase of 11 per cent. in the grant for 1991-92 to Welsh National Opera for touring in England, taking the total grant from £2·8 million to £3·1 million, an increase well above the rate of inflation and nothing for the Welsh National Opera to complain about.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his vigorous and imaginative approach, but will he look again at the position of Welsh National Opera? Is he aware that I was told by my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell, a former Secretary of State for Wales, that this morning the Welsh National Opera company's finance and general purposes committee decided that the company may have to close? Will he, therefore, as a matter of urgency, call in Mr. Peter Palumbo to discuss the matter? I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree with me that the Welsh National Opera is an international asset of priceless worth.

Mr. Renton: It would be wrong for me to pretend that my noble Friend Lord Crickhowell has not been in touch with me as well, because he has. I repeat that the Welsh National Opera's touring grant has been increased by 11 per cent. The Welsh Arts Council announced this morning an enhancement fund of £175,000 for Welsh National Opera, information which may not have reached the finance and general purposes committee when it met. The revenue funding by the Welsh Arts Council is still to be announced, but against that background, Welsh National Opera's management may, on reflection, have second thoughts about its initial reaction. We all recognise the superb quality of the Welsh National Opera's productions, which we have all enjoyed in the past.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Two thirds of Welsh National Opera's touring work is in England, and it is the major touring company in England, yet Opera North and English National Opera are receiving £600,000, while Welsh National Opera is receiving no enhancement at all. Notwithstanding any increase in inflation, that is biting into the company's financial plans for this year, so much so that it announced this morning that, unless a decision is made on further funding by 21 January, it will have no choice but to close in July.

As the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor came to an agreement that there would be joint funding of £175,000 from the Welsh Arts Council and £350,000 from the enhancement fund, why has the right hon. Gentleman allowed that agreement to be reneged on and the settlement to go forward with such devastating effect?

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands the position. I have checked it with my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), the former Minister for the Arts. Arts Ministers do not decide on individual applications, and the reaction of Welsh Members this afternoon makes me glad about that. If they did, we would be constantly pressurised by one hon. Member or another asking why Y had done badly when X had done well.

I repeat that the Welsh Arts Council, out of its total enhancement fund grant of £410,000, is giving £175,000 to Welsh National Opera. The Scottish Arts Council has received an enhancement fund grant of £700,000 or

£800,000, and doubtless out of that it will give something to Scottish Opera. Scottish Opera has not received anything directly from the enhancement fund either.

I have been told that no immediate decisions to make cuts were taken at this morning's meeting of Welsh National Opera, and I am sure that the whole House will be delighted to hear that. It intends to discuss the position further with the Arts Council of Great Britain—which is quite right, if that is what it wants—and they intend to meet in late January. I fully share the hon. Gentleman's wish to achieve a satisfactory resolution that will enable Welsh National Opera to run a full programme during 1991.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): When all the changes have been implemented, what alteration in the balance of expenditure in the Arts Council vote does my right hon. Friend foresee? What will be spent centrally, and what will be spent regionally? Within a typical regional budget, what percentage will be Arts Council funding, and what percentage will come from the local authority? That is germane to the question of the balance of representation in regional arts.

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend asks precisely the same questions that I have been asking since I took up the job of Minister for the Arts. The answer to his first question is that the figures are not yet available, and I have postponed moving to delegation until a detailed plan of costs and administrative structure is available to me. My hon. Friend's second question follows from his first. I cannot say now what the balance will be between the money that goes to the performing artist and that which is spent on administration. I do not want to move forward wholeheartedly until I am certain that a lower proportion of the money available will be spent on meeting administrative costs.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I want to express my pleasure that the Theatre Royal, Stratford East, which is in my constituency, is to receive £75,000, which is well deserved. I hope that the Minister will come to Newham to see what the borough is doing to support the arts, and that he will have discussions with the Secretary of State for the Environment to establish what additional resources can be made available to local authorities—perhaps recognising their support for the arts through the standard spending assessment. A number of local authorities are under great pressure, because, as we know, the arts are not a compulsory area of expenditure for them. What discussions are the Minister prepared to have with the Secretary of State for the Environment on that important matter?

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. It is always nice to receive support, even if it is from an unusual quarter of the House. I was particularly pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman's support for the grant decided upon by the Arts Council for the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. I read in the newspapers this morning that its director was rather surprised at receiving a grant at all, so presumably it made a very good Christmas present for him. I know from that theatre's work that the grant is very well deserved. If an opportunity presents itself, I shall be delighted to visit that theatre with the hon. Gentleman.

During Question Time a few days ago, I told the hon. Gentleman that if there is clear evidence that local authorities are unnecessarily or excessively cutting arts spending, I would certainly consider that question and seek to discuss it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I have no statutory responsibilities in that regard, but, with the hon. Gentleman's help, I will gladly keep a close eye on the situation.

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): Will my right hon. Friend accept my warm and generous personal congratulations on his appointment, and on his infinite wisdom in selecting my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) as his Parliamentary Private Secretary?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is no cultural or artistic desert north of Watford, and that that is particularly true of the west midlands, where the arts are flourishing? The arts world will welcome with acclamation my right hon. Friend's statement, for which I applaud him, that 49 per cent. of the funding will go to the provinces.

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his supportive remarks, and can only endorse his comments on my wisdom in appointing as my Parliamentary Private Secretary my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden), who is well known for his interest in the arts. I was glad that he accepted.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I get the awful feeling that we have been conned again. I can read this Minister like a book. I want to know what help will be given to the east midlands—never mind the first division that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), or even the second division. We are a non-league club, and I want to know what the Minister is going to do about it.

Mr. Renton: If, from my quick reading of the list, I have interpreted the acronyms correctly, I suspect that the Firebird trust is in the east midlands, and I note that it is receiving an enhancement award of £24,000. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity of visiting that trust during the Christmas holidays to establish how it is planning to spend that money.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a balance must be struck between the benefits of delegation and those of devolution, and that the companies concerned must have confidence in their funding bodies? Will he take great care not to devolve responsibility for companies having national and international reputations until, and unless, they confirm that they have confidence in the regional body as opposed to the national body?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend makes the point extremely well. It is precisely the case that I want the regional arts boards to be known and respected in their areas—as a consequence of their chairmen, staff, and the professional advice available to them—before major delegation takes place.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Is not the Minister being a bit complacent? He is failing to acknowledge the consternation that he has caused to supporters of the Welsh National Opera throughout the country. Will he make whatever representations are necessary to end the confusion and to secure WNO's future?

Mr. Renton: I stress that the decisions in question are taken by the Arts Council, not by the Minister for the Arts. I do not want to repeat the figures, but I acknowledge the proper feeling of caring and love for the Welsh National Opera that is shared by the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members representing Welsh constituencies. I hope that, when he reconsiders the figures that I mentioned today on the increased touring grant, and the enhancement money and increase in revenue funding from the Arts Council, he and the company will arrive at the conclusion that, in all the circumstances, the Welsh National Opera has done quite well. Naturally it would have liked to receive more—but which arts customer in this country would not like that?

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Will my right hon. Friend put some flesh on his comments about local authority representation on the regional boards? Will he ensure wherever possible that each county has a representative on the regional authority? For example, it would be deeply unacceptable if Nottinghamshire were to be represented by someone from Leicestershire or Derbyshire. I refer to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) my right hon. Friend's remarks about the grant to the Firebird trust. Neither the hon. Member for Ashfield nor I have ever heard of its activities in north Nottinghamshire, and that concerns us.

Mr. Renton: Perhaps my hon. Friend will also want toi inform his ignorance during the Christmas holiday, and will tell me the result of his investigations when we meet again in January. To allow more flexible local authority representation on the boards, I moved on from the decisions taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). I decided that, although the membership of the boards should be kept as small as possible, they could be increased to 18 if necessary; and that if local authorities really considered that number unsatisfactory and still too small, they could make representations to the Arts Council and to myself to increase it up to 24 members, of which one third could be local authority representatives.

How the local authorities choose those representatives is up to them. I do not want to impose a rigid arrangement, because the situation will differ from area to area. One way would be for all local authorities to meet together in the consultative forum that I mentioned, and there elect their representatives on the arts boards. It will be better for them to decide for themselves rather than have the selection method imposed by me, from the centre.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What about money for libraries—and for books in particular? What is the situation in respect of the natural history museum, where, for the sake of £80,000 to £100,000, a very important scientific reference section is in crisis, and of the British library, which cannot even afford subscriptions to some of the scientific periodicals that it most certainly ought to be able to afford?

Mr. Renton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman, whom I have known for many years, will not fall into the trap into which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) falls of always using the word "crisis" whenever he talks about arts or library funding. As to the natural history museum, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) knows, precise allocation of funds within the museum is a matter for its director and trustees; it is not a matter for me. As the hon. Gentleman also knows, the recent public expenditure settlements gave museums and galleries an average 8·5 per cent. increase in running costs.

I met the chairman of the British library this morning, and we had a long talk about the development of the British library building. I cannot say that he pointed me in the direction of the crisis in running costs that the hon Gentleman has just mentioned.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that today's news that Opera North is to receive £650,000 from the enhancement fund has been warmly welcomed in Leeds and the north of England? It should also be welcomed in the east midlands, as Opera North tours regularly to Nottingham. Without that extra money Opera North, and not the Welsh National Opera, would have folded. It is already having to cut its current Christmas and new year programme. Does he agree that, if we are to move towards more devolution to the regions —and perhaps if one day Opera North devolves to the Yorkshire region—it is crucial that we have a fair distribution of resources? Despite this welcome news, will my right hon. Friend ignore the special pleading of Welsh National Opera, as it is still the best-funded regional opera company in Great Britain, and we must move towards greater parity of opera funding?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend's comments again make me glad that I have the Arts Council as a filter between me and representations made by hon. Members. I am pleased with his comments about Opera North. It is true that it has received a substantial sum from the enhancement fund and that it does not confine its activities to the north of England. In conjunction with the Royal Shakespeare company, it put on the extremely successful performance of "Showboat" in London this year. The only trouble was that it was such a sell-out that many people who wished to see it could not get tickets.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I hope that the Minister will not ignore the representations made on behalf of the Welsh National Opera company. The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) spoke about the way in which moneys were to be divided up after the reorganisation. I make a plea on behalf of writers, artists and potters and others who should be receiving money that it does not go into the pockets of the professional aesthetes and fat cats who sit on the quangos which so often govern the arts in the regions.

Mr. Renton: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I shall not ignore the points put to me about Welsh National Opera. In answering a number of serious questions on that subject this afternoon, I have pointed out that the balance of the funding to be made available to Welsh National Opera in the year ahead is rather better than it seemed at first sight. I hope that their initial reaction will be slightly different after they have thought a little more about it.

I fully agree with the hon. Gentleman's second point. Indeed, to make certain that there is no increase in administrative costs, I have asked to receive the report by April 1991. In all fairness, it must be said that there are many people who sit on such quangos, or non-governmental bodies, to help us with advice about the arts——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Government were going to get rid of quangos.

Mr. Renton: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman waits a minute. Those people give their service free of charge, and we are grateful that they do so.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): If a regional arts board wishes to supplement its income by running a lottery, will it be allowed to do so, or would that cut across any plans that the Government might have for running a national lottery to supplement the arts?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend will know that that question should be directed to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary rather than to me. The Home Office has overall responsibility for policy on lotteries. At the moment, if the lottery had a limited prize it would be within the law, but if it were substantial, it would not be. I will certainly bring my hon. Friends remarks about lotteries to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Can my right hon. Friend give us an assurance that the granting of public money to the regions will be fairly balanced so that areas such as Yorkshire compare favourably with Wales, Scotland and elsewhere, taking into account the size of their populations?

Mr. Renton: That is an extremely interesting point. At the moment there is a great imbalance between what London receives, in pounds per head of population, and what some of the regions receive. I am sure that, as we develop the national arts strategy, that is one of the aspects which should be considered. If it is in order, Mr. Speaker, may I say that, when I looked at the figures this morning, I realised that my region, South East Arts, gets the lowest grant per head of population in the kingdom?

BILL PRESENTED

Welfare of Animals at Slaughter

Sir Richard Body, supported by Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Mr. Andrew Bowden, Mr. Bill Walker, Mr. Christopher Hawkins and Mr. Jerry Wiggin, presented a Bill to make further provision for the welfare of animals at slaughter: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 25 January and to be printed. [Bill 52.]

Elimination of Poverty in Retirement

4.55 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require local authorities and health authorities to monitor the condition of their retired population; to eliminate standing charges on gas, electricity and water; to exempt pensioners from licence charges and telephone rental; to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes; to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings; and to appoint a Minister with responsibility for retired people.

This Bill is very timely. Throughout the past few weeks, the country has been shivering in the grip of Arctic weather. Yet, as of 9 December, no cold weather payments had been made. For cold weather payments to be made, there have to be seven consecutive days with a temperature below freezing point, and the wind chill factor is not taken into account.

Pensioners are living in greater poverty than in any other country in western Europe, and the situation is deteriorating. The lot of many pensioners is to see local hospitals close, local health services curtailed and social service facilities cut because of local government expenditure cuts. In many of our cities, there is a possible threat to the concessionary fares scheme which, in London, allows free transport for pensioners. Pensioners feel that some of those services are under serious threat.

The value of the pension is the crucial issue and is at the centre of the Bill. In November 1979 the average single state old-age pension was 20·4 per cent. of gross earnings. As of next April, with the increase that the Government have announced, it will be 16 per cent., and 25·6 per cent. for a pensioner couple. Quite simply, the reason is that, in 1980, the Government broke the link between the state old-age pension and average earnings and instead linked it to average prices, which meant that the amount of money taken away from each pensioner is now the astronomical figure of £14 a week for a single pensioner and more than £20 a week for a pensioner couple. That is an awful lot of money—it adds up to more than £6 billion taken away during that period.

Contrast that with the billions of pounds which have been handed out in tax relief to the super-rich, who can use it to buy second cars, third homes and fourth holidays each year. The property boom in London is the beneficiary of those tax cuts, and the pensioners have paid for them.

The Bill seeks to restore the link as soon as possible. We must remember that pensioners lose out because the link with earnings has been broken and pensions are linked to prices instead, and if one considers how the retail prices index affects low-income households—the majority of those on the state old-age pension are low-income households—there are some interesting statistics. In the third quarter of this year, the retail prices index showed a year-on-year increase of 7·4 per cent. For a pensioner household the figure was 8 per cent. The year-on-year figure for the whole year was 10·6 per cent., and 12 per cent. for pensioner households.

Pensioners lose not only because of the break of the link with earnings, but because they are small households. They shop at corner shops, where prices are higher, and they buy smaller quantities. The benefits of going to

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

hypermarkets on ring roads and bypasses are not available to them. They have to shop in more expensive places. The state old-age pension should reflect old people's needs.

In 1987, 25 per cent. of pensioners' incomes were less than half the average, and the figure has increased rapidly since: state pensions are in a worse position as a percentage of all pensioner incomes. Pensioners are becoming progressively worse off. The Social Security Act 1986, for example, damaged the state earnings-related pension scheme by removing consideration of the best 20 years and substituting the entire working lifetime. That has made the prospects of many people in work particularly bad. The 1988 social security reforms made 2,090,000 pensioners worse off immediately. It should not be forgotten that the Prime Minister pioneered the introduction of the social fund, ending the system of automatic payments under the single payment scheme and substituting an arrangement allowing loans or grants.

During the last full year in which single payments were made, 12 per cent. of all single payments went to pensioners or pensioner households. In the latest year for which figures are available, only 0·1 per cent. of crisis loans and only 4·5 per cent. of budget loans were made to pensioners. That was not because pensioners did not need such loans; it was because the present culture, and the present evaluation of society, mean that people receive grants if they are entitled to them, but will not take out a loan knowing that in the future it will have to be reclaimed from pensions or benefits. The loan system is one of the most disgraceful aspects of the current social security legislation, and I believe that it should be abolished.

My Bill contains a series of comprehensive measures that would dramatically change society's attitude to elderly people. We should remember, that one day, every Member of Parliament will be a pensioner. One day, everyone will need help from someone else. The idea that everyone can take care of himself is arrant nonsense: everyone requires health facilities and support, and it is about time that we recognised the enormous debt that we owe to the pensioners who have put so much into our society.

First, the Bill provides for the appointment of a Minister responsible for co-ordinating pension policy throughout Government Departments—policy on housing, transport, health education and the environment. All those matters affect pensioners. I do not believe that, for example, education should be available only for those receiving job-related training or attending college or university; education should be available for life, including the adult education classes which have been so drastically cut. The Minister for Pensions would have a wide brief.

Secondly, local authorities would be required to produce an annual report on all their activities as they relate to pensioners. The report would list, for instance, the advice services that authorities provide, the day centres in the area and other facilities that they already offer or for which they are campaigning: in other words, it would constitute an audit of what is available to pensioner households throughout the community.

Thirdly, health authorities would be required to produce a statement on the condition of the elderly people in their communities, containing details of, for instance, life expectancy, the health facilities that are available, the effects of local hospital closures and the centring of facilities on remote general hospitals, and the need for specialised services—chiropody, for example—and for health centres for the elderly, on the same principle as well-woman clinics.

Over the past few years, we have witnessed the privatisation of many utilities. Over the past few weeks we have seen the obscenity of the sale of electricity boards, enabling vast profits to be made by those fortunate enough to get hold of a few shares in a service that should never have been sold in the first place. The Bill proposes the abolition of standing charges for gas, electricity and water in pensioner households; the profits made by the companies concerned could easily cover such charges without any increase in unit costs for other consumers. The Bill also seeks to abolish television licence fees for pensioner households, a matter in regard to which my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has acted decisively in the past. The same applies to telephone rentals; moreover—this was brought forcefully to my attention today—why should pensioner households now be expected to pay for calls to directory inquiries?

The Bill would also introduce a national scheme to restore free travel on public transport and the earnings link. Above all—this is crucial—it seeks to meet the demand by the National Pensioners Convention that the state old-age pension be set at half the amount of average earnings for couples, and at a third of that amount for single people. That would mean a pension of about £75 a week, which is no more than the pensioners of this country deserve.

I hope that the Bill will receive support.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. David Winnick, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mrs. Audrey Wise, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Tom Clarke, Ms. Dawn Primarolo, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Chris Smith and Mr. John Hughes.

ELIMINATION OF POVERTY IN RETIREMENT

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn accordingly presented a Bill to require local authorities and health authorities to monitor the condition of their retired population; to eliminate standing charges on gas, electricity and water; to exempt pensioners from licence charges and telephone rental; to extend pensioners' concessionary fare schemes; to make provision for the calculation of old age pensions by reference to average earnings; and to appoint a Minister with responsibility for retired people: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 15 February and to be printed. [Bill 53.]

Points of Order

5.6 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. One hour and 36 minutes after Question Time, it is a bit difficult to raise a point of order arising out of questions, but that is what Mr. Speaker asked me to do.

On Scottish questions, we reached question 20. Question 21 concerned provision in Scottish hospitals in relation to casualties who may return from the Gulf. That may be happening in a horrendous way before our next Scottish Question Time. I simply wanted to ask whether the Scottish Office has inquired about the possibility of a statement being made, or of a question being answered orally.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I understand that Mr. Speaker suggested to the hon. Gentleman that he raise his point of order after the statements. I can, however, answer his point by saying that Mr. Speaker has not been informed that a statement is to be made.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you advise me? Between now and the rising of the House there will be little time or opportunity for hon. Members to ask about the advice that should be given to traders throughout the country about Sunday opening. Last Thursday, I asked the Leader of the House—who, I am glad to see, is present now—to arrange a debate this week so that the matter could be highlighted and traders might not infringe the law.

In Prime Minister's questions yesterday, the Prime Minister might have been expected to repeat what his predecessor had often said about the law. Can you tell me, Madam Deputy Speaker, what course I should pursue to ensure that a debate is held so that all retailers may be informed of the law and how they should act?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is barely a point of order. I think that the hon Gentleman is trying to hijack the next debate. I am sure that he is a wise enough parliamentarian to know that he may well have an opportunity to raise his point during the Christmas Adjournment motion debate. As he has pointed out, the Leader of the House is present in the Chamber.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On the front page of today's *Evening Standard*—right on the front page—is a picture of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who has apparently moved into new accommodation not far from the House of Commons. We are supposed to believe in security in this place—and out there. But the name of the street where the house is situated and the number on a pillar outside the door are clearly shown in the picture. Can something be done about security? We all have to take responsibility for it. The media must also act responsibly. They have failed the nation.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Both the Chair and the House take very seriously what the hon. Gentleman has said. Though it is not a point of order, I hope that his comments have been noted in all quarters of the House.

Adjournment (Christmas)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 20th December do adjourn until Monday 14th January.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

5.9 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): It is customary to use the Adjournment debate to reflect upon matters of political immediacy, even though one realises that the Government cannot give an authoritative answer at the conclusion of the debate. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will convey to the Treasury, with Christmas good will, the hope that it will reflect seriously on points that are of considerable and growing moment. I refer to the deepening recession that is evident now throughout the economy and which, in my judgment, has been made that much worse by the inflexibility of a fixed exchange rate system that inhibits an interest rate policy.

A modest roll call of honour accounts for about a dozen Tory Back Benchers who were not seduced by the arguments for membership of the exchange rate mechanism. They represent an unrepentant set of Davids against the Goliaths of the Confederation of British Industry, the City and the occupants of the Treasury Bench, but I do not believe that the Goliaths won the argument in the recent developments.

The debate was conditioned by the belief that membership of the exchange rate mechanism would confer great benefits. With the strength of continental currencies, it was believed that we could go for lower interest rates without prejudicing the parity of sterling, because it would receive support from our neighbours and friends. That view was reinforced by the gesture of British membership, which was accompanied by a 1 per cent. cut in interest rates. Whatever expectations were encouraged during those early hours have not been fulfilled since.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is over 15 weeks ago.

Mr. Biffen: I know that I shall have the vocal, and perhaps even further, support of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He is a very good ally. The very fact that he comes alongside a Tory radical allows me to understand his point.

Mr. Skinner: I remember that, on 28 October 1971, the right hon. Gentleman was one of the 30 or so Tories who went into the Lobby against the Common Market. His leader at that time, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) and the rag tag and bobtail dragged us into the Common Market without a vote. I remember the 36 Divisions. We might still do the Lobbies together. How many years is it since then? For 19 years, we have carried on the battle. I look forward to a few more in the Tory ranks who ratted at the time getting on board ship against the exchange rate mechanism, the single currency and the central bank, dominated by the Germans.

Mr. Biffen: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Very wisely, he is taking a panoramic view of the issue. I wish, however, to concentrate on the narrow issue of the state of the economy.

There is now a burgeoning recession. I am not sure that that point is really appreciated by the Treasury Bench and the Governor of the Bank of England. There is still talk

[Mr. Biffen]

about the recession being short and shallow. I see little evidence, on an anecdotal basis, to persuade me that the recession has that character. I believe that, in many sectors of the economy, we have been in recession for a considerable period. That makes nonsense of the proposition that the recession will be short.

If I need additional evidence, I move away from feelings and sentiments that are shared by almost every hon. Member who comes from an industrial area and turn to that great and respected source of judgment, the Confederation of British Industry, whose judgment is much more likely to weigh with the Goliaths of the Treasury Bench. The latest CBI report says:

"Output expectations . . . in December represent the largest expected fall since December 1980."

In my view, the case is clearly made out for an early reduction in interest rates.

No one who looks at the general pattern of demand in this country and at monetary control can suppose that we are in a lax monetary position that will not admit of a further reduction in interest rates. The Government's reluctance to cut interest rates is because of their inhibitions on account of our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. In a recent debate, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"There can be no question of a reduction in interest rates that is not fully justified by our position in the ERM. That will be the case however strong is the pressure for lower interest rates based on other indicators."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 966.]

Other indicators? The rate of unemployment, the fall in industrial investment, the range of economic experiences that we can now trace within our domestic economy? Are they to be set at naught and are we predominantly to take a view on

"our position in the ERM"?

My hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) intervened in the debate to give his benediction to the Government's policy. We could argue about fixed exchange rates and free exchange rates on another occasion. We adhere to two different economic philosophies. Due to the fraternal nature of the Conservative party, which has been so evident over recent weeks, we can cope with that.

There is, however, a narrow issue: whether membership of the exchange rate mechanism was effected at an appropriate parity. If it was not effected at an appropriate parity, a perpetual disadvantage will weigh upon British industry, just as the return to the gold standard at a wholly unrealistic figure cast its shadow over the operation of the economy in the 1920s and 1930s. I do not want the House to be burdened by the oppressive memory of Montagu Norman. Central bankers had a great deal more control over our affairs then than, happily, they do at the moment. I want politicians to be able to form their judgment on what the economy requires and to reach a decision on such intimate matters as the rate of interest.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): I do not want to break the shallow unity that has broken out. Indeed, I was hoping for a more contrite speech from my right hon. Friend, since we had to pay high rates of interest in recent years when we were not members of the exchange rate mechanism.

My right hon. Friend referred to giving the maximum flexibility to politicians, but to exercise proper responsibility we need a stable medium of exchange. Unless we have a secure and valuable medium of exchange—a currency whose value does not change from one minute to the next—how on earth shall we be able to address the deep-seated problems of our economy? If we prefer instead to deal in funny money—in a currency that readily depreciates from year to year—surely we are perpetrating a fraud on the people we represent and are denying ourselves the proper responsibility of addressing our economic problems?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to have allowed my hon. Friend to make his speech in an intervention.

Mr. Nelson: I am sorry.

Mr. Biffen: No: it is a technique that I admire.

The inflationary difficulties that we have experienced in recent years derived precisely from when we tried to shadow the deutschmark a few years ago. The lessons that I draw from that are precisely the opposite of those drawn by my hon. Friend.

Of course one would like a degree of relative stability in these matters. It is perfectly possible to have a system of proper and responsible monetary and fiscal policies that will produce that. That is the responsibility of national politicians and Governments answering in this Parliament. Indeed, it can be argued that, since 1979, there has been a period when those policies produced considerable advantageous movements in the exchange rate.

We shall debate that some other time. I want to return to the crucial point of whether we have joined the exchange rate mechanism at a level that will place us at a permanent disadvantage.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The point that I want to make was made by another central banker, Karl Otto Pöhl, who said that domestic interest rates should be established primarily in relation to the state of the domestic economy and not in accordance with or to sustain an exchange rate that might be selective. A central banker—one of the most powerful—agrees with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Biffen: If I lose the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) but gain the support of central banker Pöhl, who am I to complain?

There are voices in continental Europe who take the more open view on how we should conduct our economic arrangements within the wider partnership of Europe, which must include eastern Europe. We must not allow ourselves to be argued into the belief that we are merely representative of one narrow national interest in our desire for looser economic and monetary arrangements for our Community partners and ourselves. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point.

May I be allowed, with tedious repetition, to return to the central point, which we must understand and evaluate—whether we have joined the exchange rate mechanism at a level that will confer a permanent disadvantage on the industrialists and workers of this country, unless and until it is rectified. Gone is the glad morning confidence when the exchange rate mechanism was announced, when there was practically a competition of euphoria between the Treasury Bench and the Opposition Front Bench, then represented by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) but now elevated in status

by my neighbour from Shropshire, the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). That shows that when the two Front Benches—the Goliaths of Parliament—are in absolute unity, it is time for the grubby Davids and Denises to come out and to search their scrips for their pebbles.

I am delighted to see that there is a growing sense of realism about these affairs. An excellent speech was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), who called in question the desirability of the exchange rate mechanism if we are to be in this Lubyanka. *[Interruption.]* I want to show myself as broad European.

My argument is reinforced by a letter in *The Times* from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). I must mention my pair, the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice). I had hoped that our close association would have stripped him of any innocence. He is saying, "Can't we renegotiate?" He believes that those with whom we have joined the mechanism on disadvantageous terms will say, "We are terribly sorry, we did not realise that it would be so difficult for you; of course we shall accommodate a new parity."

We need action a bit more robust than that. Let us be clear: there must be a growing volume of protest in this House and elsewhere that the present terms of the exchange rate mechanism are wholly disadvantageous for this country. Those who feel disposed to argue that are not alone, because those opinions are propounded outside, particularly in the quality press. I have in mind the article of Anatole Kaletsky in *The Times*, which said:

"The conflict between Britain's domestic economic needs and the disciplines of the ERM will grow steadily worse."

That is the analysis of a man—I have not the faintest idea of his politics—who believes that, if a country joins at the wrong parity, it does not naturally resolve itself. If anything, it will be compounded through time.

My simple message to the Treasury Bench is that this nation is enduring a considerable recession in manufacturing industry—a recession that is spreading to most parts of the economy. We do ourselves no credit to talk about it in terms of something that will be short or shallow. Remedial action should come sooner rather than later. One of the most obvious forms of remedial action is to lower interest rates. Inasmuch as that is also an action necessary to rectify some of the imbalance that is implicit in exchange rate mechanism membership, the sooner it is undertaken the better.

5.26 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): One of the interesting aspects of the House of Commons is the rejuvenation of Members when they leave office. The speech of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) showed the beneficial effects of throwing off the cares of office. The Leader of the House will be delighted by that speech, because when the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North spoke as a Minister—he was a very good Minister—he did not make stimulating or inspiring speeches because, as Leader of the House, he could not do so. He now has the freedom of the Back Benches and holds the interest of the House.

Another interesting aspect of the House is that, although hon. Members are prepared to listen to such reviews of national issues, they are also prepared to listen to issues that affect small numbers of people. I ask the House not to adjourn until we have discussed four separate groups of disabled people who are neglected. The first is a group of severely disabled people who are recipients of the independent living fund. They need the money from that fund to keep out of institutions. The independent living fund enables these people to maintain their independence and their dignity. Without it, they will be forced into long-term residential care, at great cost to the state.

The Government have threatened to wind up the independent living fund in 1993. They say that responsibility for the payment of the fund will pass to local authorities, but that is a sacrilege, because we all know that most local authorities cannot be bothered to help disabled people. Many others have competing claims on their resources.

There are some good local authorities, but there are plenty of very bad ones that are indifferent to the needs of disabled people. Some local authorities will spend money on fancy bypasses and on all kinds of popular projects rather than on helping disabled people. We know that that will happen and that the result will be catastrophic for severely disabled people.

Some severely disabled people receive large amounts from the fund to keep them out of hospital. Mr. J, for example, who lives in Shropshire, is paralysed from the neck down and receives £400 a week from the fund. Before the introduction of the ILF he was cared for by his 82-year-old mother. That man will not be allowed such independence and dignity if that money is withdrawn. If the local authority cannot, or will not, pay, he will be incarcerated in an institution.

The Select Committee on Social Services believes that the ILF should become a statutory body, and nearly all organisations that represent disabled people believe that it should be preserved. The all-party disablement group has insisted that it should be preserved. I hope that the Government will think again and will not abolish it.

The second group of severely disabled people for whom I am concerned are those affected by discrimination. In the past, the House has debated the need for such anti-discrimination legislation, but the Government claim that there is insufficient evidence of discrimination against disabled people—what nonsense. Anyone who is severely disabled could tell Ministers that, every day of their lives, they experience gross and vindictive discrimination. Some of that discrimination is unthinking, but every day severely disabled people are confronted with it.

Some disabled people are not allowed to go into the pubs of their choice. Others are denied access to various buildings. Some cannot go to seaside resorts and some are denied jobs. Every day those people are hit, and hit again, by such discrimination. Although we do not see it in the House, it exists. We should deal with it because it is scandalous if someone is denied a job because he is in a wheelchair, he has an artificial limb or he is deaf or blind.

For the past two years, the Government have reviewed employment opportunities for disabled people. However, they have never discussed that review with those organisations that represent disabled people. The Government should take far more notice of the opinion of disabled people and their organisations. We have legislation to combat discrimination on the grounds of sex and race, and such legislation is badly needed to combat discrimination against disabled people—that is certainly the opinion of disabled people and their representative organisations.

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

The Governments of Germany, Belgium, Greece, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal have introduced legislation to combat discrimination against the disabled. If they can find the time and the good will to introduce legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people, why cannot we? In the United States, a marvellous new Bill has been passed to give new rights to disabled people covering a range of matters, which states that employers cannot discriminate against disabled people. I wish that we had led the way, but at least we could follow the Americans and the Europeans.

The third group of people to whom I want to draw to the attention of the House are those service men who have been disabled through negligence. The House will recall the campaign that was conducted a few years ago to allow service men to sue when they had been disabled as a result of negligence. Three years ago, no ex-service man or acting service man could sue for negligence, because section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947 prevented such actions.

I was proud to take part in the campaign on behalf of those service men. We fought the Ministry of Defence, who argued that it could not allow service men to sue the MOD as that would be bad for discipline, it would upset people and, in any case, the negligence could not be proved. For that reason we fought our campaign, and fighting with me were many disabled ex-service men in wheelchairs—I could name them, but I do not want to detain the House.

After two years, the MOD gave way and said that it would repeal section 10 of the 1947 Act so that service men would be allowed to sue for negligence. That was fine. At that time, the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) introduced the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Bill, and he helped us wonderfully. As a result, the Government changed their mind and service men can now sue for negligence. When the Bill was enacted, however, the Government said that they were not prepared to allow those people who had campaigned in the past to sue for negligence. They were not prepared to make the Bill retrospective, but that was an anomalous act on the part of the Government. Those men who had campaigned with me were loyal ex-service men who loved the services, but they have been denied the right to sue for negligence.

I have given the MOD example after example of retrospective legislation. For example, there were some in 1532, as well as some in 1987 as a result of the Local Government Act. I believe that the legislation should be retrospective to enable those ex-service men to sue for negligence. If that is not possible—I am trying to be reasonable—why can the Government not give those people an ex gratia payment if they can prove that they were disabled through negligence? That is all I am asking.

I have raised that issue tonight because we have a new Prime Minister. When I put this problem to the former Prime Minister, I included a number of proposals to enable an ex gratia payment to be made—there are not many people involved. The right hon. Lady said that she was not prepared to consider that, because of practical difficulties. In response, I proposed a number of compromises to limit the numbers involved, so that only those who had evidence to prove that they had been maimed through negligence could claim.

All those suggestions were turned down. I hope that the Leader of the House will ask the new Prime Minister to review the issue—that is all I am asking. Those loyal ex-service men have a powerful case and they deserve to be considered.

I have spoken for too long, but I want to spend just a couple of minutes on a group for whom I have campaigned for the past 25 years—nuclear test veterans. The Government have refused to allow them compensation on the basis of lack of evidence that they have suffered from radiation. The Government's stand is preposterous. They refused to move on haemophiliacs who have been infected by contaminated blood, but they then changed their mind. Similarly, they have refused to act on nuclear test veterans, but, sooner or later, I am sure that they will change their mind.

The essence of my case is this. British ex-service men suffered the effects of radiation in the nuclear tests 40 years ago, and they have been suffering ever since. How can the Government deny that they suffered radiation damage? The United States Government looked into the matter for their ex-service men. They found that radiation damage was proved and they are paying for 13 cancers caused by radiation to their ex-service men suffering from radiation to which they were exposed at the tests.

What is the difference between American soldiers and British soldiers? Their bodies are the same. The nuclear tests were the same. The radiation was the same. What is the difference? The difference is solely in the Governments' attitudes. That is all that I wish to say. It is a simple, strong, powerful and moving case.

I ask the Leader of the House to take on board the issues that I have raised. I do not expect answers or solutions from him tonight. He has a difficult job. However, if he passes my comments on to the Ministers responsible and to the Prime Minister, and if the Prime Minister will review the matter which I raised, perhaps we could start the ball rolling. I have made reasonable points. Severly disabled people should simply be given a fair chance.

5.41 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) is a well-known champion of disabled people. I have a good deal of sympathy with the points that he made about discrimination against disabled people. Many disabled people live lives of great heroism in their attempts to carry on normally at home and at work. It is up to all of us to give them as much support as possible.

I wish to speak about planning laws and their impact on a country such as ours at this late stage of the 20th century. We sometimes forget that we are basically a small, overcrowded island. I represent the part known as mid-Warwickshire, which is the very heart of England. Yet it is only 100 miles from this Chamber. My comments inevitably sound parochial, but they refer to problems that are replicated in a hundred and one places throughout the United Kingdom.

There are considerable environmental pressures on all of us. Many greedy developers, given the chance, would concrete over the whole of the west midlands or the south of England without any worry, if an enormous profit was to be made out of it. My county of Warwickshire is one of the smallest in the country. The latest structure plan

decrees that there will be about 37,000 new houses in the county by the turn of the century, of which 9,000 will be in my constituency. That has given rise to a great deal of anxiety among residents. In addition, further industrial development is promised. We already have a surfeit of technology parks—the polite way of referring to industrial sites—and more are apparently planned. Many of my constituents believe that those plans are too expansive. I urge the Secretary of State for the Environment to limit the structure plan and I hope that he will take that on board. I and many of my constituents have been in correspondence with him.

With the advent of the M40—which will come on stream between Birmingham and London as early as next month—my constituency will be between two motorways. On the other side we have the M1. Our communications makes us an extremely desirable area. Like the rest of the country we need housing and jobs. There are constant references to that need in the House. But jobs and houses should not be to the exclusion of everything else. When green areas are finally breached, they have gone for ever. There is no way of getting them back.

The quality of life is not merely the provision of reasonable accommodation for everyone. The environment in which one lives is also of paramount importance. Compared with that of many countries, our environment is still unique. It is green and pleasant and it attracts many people. What is why so many people from abroad wish to retire here.

Another threat to which the Department of the Environment should address itself is that of mineral extraction. It is linked to what I have already said about planning. In Britain we have strong laws which demand that there should be sand and gravel extraction and that counties should maintain their quotas. I submit that the quotas and the law are in urgent need of drastic revision. Wide areas of desirable countryside are being torn up for sand and gravel. Currently there are three sites in my constituency. The landscape will be severely scarred for many years as a result of the operations.

Surveys carried out throughout the county of Warwickshire reveal a veritable "sea" of sand and gravel deposits, the extraction of which will threaten the entire county with environmental hazards for decades to come. The stipulated quotas are unrealistic and need revision. More sand and gravel should be imported into Britain and a better system should be established to move it round the country from extraction sites where the environment is not an issue. We cannot continue despoiling the best parts of the country purely to extract sand and gravel.

My third point about planning is that the Department of the Environment needs to revise its overall planning policies, particularly in crowded and desirable areas such as the one which I am fortunate enough to represent. In a recent local planning dispute, I sided with the residents, but they were overruled by the district council. There are no politics in my point because it is a Conservative council. The chief officer of the council subsequently wrote to me stating:

> "Planning committees are faced with the situation that planning legislation has made it clear that there is a presumption in favour of granting planning applications, unless there are planning reasons why applications should not be granted."

That was not terribly well put, but we get the message. In other words, he says that the objectors are guilty until they can prove themselves innocent. The assumption is against them right from the start. Unless they have a very good case, they will lose. Many of us have not taken that on board sufficiently. As we are all aware, planning applications arrive at the offices of our councils every day. It is just not good enough.

Every developer has an automatic right of appeal if he is turned down by a local authority, and frequently he has the decision reversed. Over the years, his persistence is often relentless. He comes back time and again, the residents are harassed and eventually the local council gives in. Yet when the decision goes against the local residents, they have no right of appeal. I have believed for a long time that in specific circumstances a right of appeal should be open to the individual, particularly in areas where there may be considerable changes.

Unless we attend to the matters that I have mentioned and seek to obtain a genuine balance, future generations will look upon us as philistines who ruined a uniquely pleasant land and made it into an ugly and dreary one. These matters affect every hon. Member, and we must constantly and vigilantly press them with the Department of the Environment.

5.49 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) spoke from the centre of the nation. I speak from its periphery, and with some hesitancy. The announcement by the Leader of the House of the dates for the Christmas recess was received with glee because we were to have a prolonged holiday. If I oppose the motion for the Christmas Adjournment, to put on record some of the issues about which I am concerned, I may cause the wrath of the House to fall upon me.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Does not the hon. Gentleman feel that he is giving the country the wrong impression by speaking of a holiday? I am sure that, like me and like many other hon. Members, he spends a lot of time in his constituency and is active there.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Our constituents will be glad to hear that hon. Members agree with them on occasion. If they think that it is a holiday, let them bask in the summertime of Christmas discontent.

The right hon. Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) did not give me a great deal of hope that my points will be answered tonight, but I shall press them none the less. The House will well understand that during Advent—the season in which we turn our thoughts to hopes of peace and festivity—the people of Northern Ireland will be focusing their thoughts on the security situation, but it is not to that point that I wish to direct my attention. The Leader of the House will not be at all surprised if I bring before the House the problem of the non-establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee.

I recognise that descendents of Herod Agrippa abound in Northern Ireland; in that part of the nation, the slaughter of the innocents tragically continues unabated. While others say that a security situation cannot be found, I claim that a security solution alone cannot be found and that we must have a political solution. If we are to find that

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solution and for the good governance of Northern Ireland, we need a Select Committee, even if that is only one aspect of the political solution.

For 50 years, Northern Ireland had a devolved regional Parliament, given to it and kept at arm's length by this House. We were unaware of what was going on in Northern Ireland. The day-to-day responsibilities of Northern Ireland were not the affairs of this Parliament. In my view, no matter how wisely that Parliament may have governed, that was a mistake. But for the past 18 years, an even greater mistake has been made to the detriment of the people of Northern Ireland. Irrespective of the wisdom, integrity and ability—or otherwise—of Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office, scrutiny of the expenditure policy and administration of the Northern Ireland Office and its associated public bodies has been hopelessly inadequate.

The role of local government has been reduced to a charade. That has encouraged councillors to spend their time on business not strictly pertaining to local government, not to mention their limited role in the supervision of parks, leisure facilities, cemeteries and refuse collection.

I have tried unsuccessfully to find out why successive Governments have failed to abide by the rules of the House which require scrutiny by Select Committees of major Government Departments. Northern Ireland Members are willing to serve and, unlike others, have not objected to Members for English constituencies sitting on a Northern Ireland Select Committee.

In 1978, the Procedure Committee recommended that there should be a Northern Ireland Select Committee and the 1979 Conservative manifesto—the basis of the Government's mandate—contained a pledge to move forward in restoring democracy to Northern Ireland. This year, the Procedure Committee again sought to set up a Select Committee.

I can understand the Northern Ireland Office, or indeed any Government Department, being glad not to have a Select Committee breathing down its neck, but that does not excuse the House for not establishing such a Committee.

The former Leader of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland rejected the instructions of the Procedure Committee as "inopportune" at a time of sensitive negotiations. Likewise, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who rarely graces this place with his presence, opposed it. I cannot understand why any negotiations should impede the ability of this House to scrutinise a Department of Government. The clue to such opposition is perhaps to be found in the reported remark of an official to the late Airey Neave to the effect that the Government could not deliver on the 1979 manifesto because of a commitment given to Dublin. What was that commitment, who gave it and with what authority?

As far as I can see, the tardiness in establishing the Committee has nothing to do with the possibility of a devolved Government in Northern Ireland. Unless such a Government were given independent status, there must be a role for the House in scrutinising the affairs of the Northern Ireland Office.

Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no suggestion that the Northern Ireland Office will cease to exist in the foreseeable future. That means that unless we are to send Northern Ireland into limbo—as we did in 1921—there must be scrutiny by the House of Commons. At the very least, such scrutiny would still be required in respect of reserved matters, even if transferred matters went back to a devolved Administration in Northern Ireland.

The recent report of the Select Committee on the Environment reinforces the need for such a Committee. It recommended that another quango should be set up to look after environmental issues in Northern Ireland. Who will supervise that quango? Those appointed by a Department whose affairs are not scrutinised by the House.

The establishment of a Select Committee is long overdue. There must be no more hastening slowly by a Government who appear to drift rather than direct on Northern Ireland matters. In my opinion, such a move would be a clear signal to those who practise the politics of violence that they cannot succeed. In a democracy, the Government must hearken to and heed the voice of the ballot box. They dare not continue to dance to the whine of the bullet and the blast of the bomb. Politics must prevail so that semtex cannot succeed.

5.58 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Smyth) who told us of his trepidation in speaking against the motion for the Christmas Adjournment. I am happy to speak in favour of that motion because it will give the Government more time to think about and—it is to be hoped—find a solution to the problem that I am about to lay at their doorstep. It is a problem with a major impact on my constituency and an important relevance for the country—the future of the bloodstock breeding industry. The House will be aware that Newmarket is the centre of British racing. In and around my constituency the stud farms contribute substantially to Britain's economy and balance of payments, but they are facing major problems.

Britain is the world leader in breeding quality bloodstock. Although the New Zealanders, Americans and Irish all produce a number of good-quality horses, Britain is recognised as the leading nation in breeding. Last year, the turnover in British auction rings was about £116 million, of which £96 million was from one well-known company, Tattersall's, which has headquarters at Newmarket. It is estimated that £80 million of the £116 million came from foreign buyers and so attracted foreign resources into this country. There are massive private sales, particularly when horses have finished their racing days and are put out to stud as brood mares or stallions. We all know the telephone number prices for which stallions are often syndicated.

There is an estimated £200 million-worth of overseas earnings from the sale of bloodstock from this country every year—that figure is a few years out of date and the sum may be substantially more. In addition, 13,000 people are employed directly in breeding bloodstock and it is believed that there are another 4,000 jobs in the ancillary industries. The Thoroughbred Breeders Association, which represents the industry, has 2,000 members. It is an

important industry. Some people will say that it is for the wealthy such as Arabs, but I emphasise, first, that that is not necessarily the case. Many people involved in breeding bloodstock are not in that category; secondly, that argument is irrelevant. I am talking about the industry's future and the economic benefits that it brings to this country which are now under severe threat.

From 1 January 1991, Ireland's exemption under the value added tax rules of the Community's sixth directive disappears and there will be major changes in the VAT rules as they affect bloodstock sales from the Community. That means that from 1 January, the VAT rates in the major bloodstock countries of Europe will be as follows: Italy, 9 per cent.; Germany, 7 per cent.; France, 5·5 per cent.; Ireland, 2·3 per cent.; and in the United Kingdom, 15 per cent. The VAT will be charged at the point of sale.

Tattersall's, which has £96 million-worth of turnover in this country, has already opened a new sale ring and associated facilities in Ireland. It now expects to move all its operations from Newmarket to Ireland during the next year or so unless my plea to the Government is recognised and action taken. It will inevitably mean that the breeders will follow the sale ring, for the simple reason that it is far better to breed the stock close to where it will be sold than to have the massive expense of transporting it from Cambridgeshire and the other important breeding districts in this country across to Ireland for sale.

In addition, the Irish are keen to attract British breeders to go over there. The worst estimates are that about half the jobs in the Newmarket region could be lost if that were to happen. The net effect of that would be that the VAT income to this country would be lost because the industry would have gone to Ireland and the ancillary tax benefits of income tax, corporation tax and other general taxation revenues that the Government receive from the industry would disappear.

The Government's policy is, first and foremost, that they have tried to find a solution. The breeders had a meeting with my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk (Mr. Ryder) when he was Paymaster General; he recognised their arguments they put and offered his sympathy and help wherever possible. I know that the Government are looking at the problem, but we keep hearing rumours that it will not be easy to solve. My purpose in raising the subject today is to try to add further encouragement and stiffen the backbone of those who might be prepared to give up and say that they cannot find a solution. For many years the Government have offered export concessions so that a horse can be raced in this country for two years before being exported without incurring VAT problems. I understand that that concession would also disappear.

Another aspect of Government policy is their approach to VAT taxation after 1992. It is a totally market-based approach, but I also know that they believe that there should be no extra VAT rates other than the current 15 per cent. and zero rate. I totally support the Government's market-based approach. Imposed harmonisation of tax rates from Brussels would be ludicrous, and we should not move towards that. The market-based approach means the market will respond to VAT disadvantages. That is precisely what we believe will happen in the bloodstock industry. It will move to Ireland because of the VAT disadvantages that we should have in this country—that is simply the market working.

But the logic of such an argument is that, in response to that, a Government who find rates so uncompetitive should take voluntary action to bring their rates into line so that their industry is not at such a disadvantage and is not decimated. I support that principle, which reflects the principles on which the Government have addressed the problem of tax harmonisation in Europe. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Norfolk, when he was Paymaster General and my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard), the Treasury Minister who has taken over responsibility for the matter, are sympathetic to that.

The proper solution to the problem is to reclassify the horse as an agricultural animal. That may seem a simplistic answer, but it should be properly examined. When the EC and the treaty were originally devised, it was undoubtedly the intention of those involved that the horse should be an agricultural animal. Annexes A and B of the sixth directive, both of which specify farming activities, were intended to include bloodstock. Annex C of the directive, which relates to common methods of calculating VAT for agriculture, specifically includes equines under the heading of agricultural products. Therefore, there is a sound basis in Community and VAT law for classifying the horses as a agricultural animal.

There are possible objections, and it would be a foolish person who did not recognise and counter them. The first is the cost to the Government of reducing VAT from 15 per cent. to zero, but we shall lose that income anyway. It is difficult to be absolutely precise about the actual amount—it is about £10 million to £12 million VAT a year on those sales. We have a precise sales figure, but not a precise VAT figure, because there are concessions and registered people who can reclaim VAT. That money will be lost anyway, so it is not as though the Treasury must forgo it.

The second possible objection to that solution may come from the Department of Environment because it would mean that in future all horse establishments would benefit under the business rate from the same exemptions as apply to agriculture. That is peanuts. Equine establishments' business rates are minuscule when set against all the business rates raised in this country. Set against the massive loss of jobs and the general taxation of industry, their contribution becomes insignificant. There may also be objections in the context of planning by the Department of the Environment, but as agricultural exemptions are reduced in number—the Government propose to reduce them still further—the differentiation bears little close scrutiny.

There will also be implications for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. As Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Minister in that Department I must not comment on that except to say that in my view none of the problems that would be presented is insuperable.

I ask my right hon. Friend, who I know takes a close interest in these matters, and particularly in this sector of rural activity, to recognise that this is a matter of grave importance to a vital industry. Unless we voluntarily recognise the impact of this country's tax disadvantage we shall lose that industry and its economic benefits and jobs, and we shall lose the prestige that we have gained for the best bloodstock breeding in the world. I hope that, between now and when we reconvene after Christmas, the Government will think again about a solution and preferably adopt the one that I have advocated.

6.11 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): My purpose is to draw attention to the need for Newport, Gwent, to be granted city status, especially in view of its growing economic, social and cultural importance in Wales.

In March 1991, I will have represented Newport in this House for 25 years—a great honour and privilege. It is a town with a population of about 130,000. It is on the eastern seaboard of Wales, and that favourable geographic position has helped to make it an important centre of commerce, industry and communications. The progress of the town has been helped by an enlightened borough council. Major inward investment has enabled the industrial base to be diversified. Private sector investments in the pipeline now exceed £600 million.

A wide range of local, national and international companies have achieved success in Newport. They include A. B. Electronics, Inmos, Standard Telephones and Cables, Monsanto Chemicals, Marconi, Alcan, IMI Santons, the Avana confectionery group, J. Compton Sons and Webb, an important textile organisation, and Crompton Parkinson, a battery manufacturer. Newport remains a major centre for the steel industry, personified by the great Llanwern works.

Public and commercial confidence in the borough has been further advanced in recent years, with several major inward investments, including the Trustee Savings bank, the Patent Office, Panasonic, Newbridge Networks and Bisley Office Equipment. The town is also the centre for the administration of justice in Gwent; Crown, county and magistrates courts are all there. The business statistics office provides central Government with most of its trade and industry statistics, and the passport office serves about one third of Britain. It is my contention that conferring city status would help maintain the momentum of this considerable progress.

Newport has an enviable position in this country's communications network. The M4 and M5 link Newport with London and the midlands. The town has main rail routes to London, the midlands and north and west Wales. On the InterCity express, London is a mere one and a half hours away. Newport docks can accommodate vessels of up to 40,000 tonnes deadweight and they provide a worldwide import and export facility.

Newport has long been established as the commercial and retail centre for the whole of Gwent and major new developments in this area are under way.

The Newport centre provides one of the finest leisure, entertainment and conference centres in Britain. As part of the town's economic development strategy, £43 million is committed to the regeneration of the Usk river front, with a view to realising commercial, leisure and residential development opportunities.

An unusual feature of the Newport skyline is the giant transporter bridge. It is basically a suspended ferry and there is only one other bridge like it in the whole of Britain. Newport boasts a first-class museum, art gallery and central library. Tredegar house is a magnificent example of a 17th century country mansion. Two years ago it provided the site for the royal national eisteddfod of Wales. That event proved to be one of the most successful examples of this great annual national festival, which has been held for many years.

Newport has actively fostered international links. It is twinned with Heidenheim in Germany, with the city of Wuzhou in the Peoples Republic of China and with Kutaisi in the Georgian republic of the USSR.

I have tried to give a brief outline of present-day Newport, but it has a long and colourful history which can be traced from the sites of ancient Celtic settlements through the occupation by the Romans, who built the headquarters of their second Augustan legion at Caerleon. Under the Normans, Gwynllwg, the forerunner of Newport, flourished as a port and market town. A major castle was constructed early in the 12th century to defend the crossing point over the River Usk. The castle became the centre of the lordship and traders settled close to its walls for protection, thus founding Novus Burgus, or New Town, which later became Newport.

Unfortunately, during the uprising of Owain Glyndwr in 1402, much damage was done to some of the principal buildings. Nevertheless, the borough's first charter had been granted in 1385 and the title of mayor was adopted in 1476. Newport's cathedral, St Wooles, stands on the site of St. Gwynllyw's church, which was established in 500 AD. It was designated a cathedral in 1921 on the creation of the diocese of Monmouth.

One of the most notable events in Newport's history was the Chartist uprising in 1839. It was led by John Frost, a former mayor of the town, and the Chartists marched down Stow hill fighting for their right to vote and protesting about the desperate economic and social conditions of the time. My predecessor, the late Sir Frank Soskice, a former Home Secretary, was so impressed by the event that when he retired from the House he took the title Lord Stow Hill. Last year the borough celebrated the 150th anniversary of the uprising and the town's central shopping centre has been named John Frost square.

In the 19th century, Newport grew rapidly and its port flourished, exporting millions of tonnes of coal mined in the valleys of Gwent. The town also became a major centre for the steel industry, which it still is, but now its industrial structure has been diversified and it has a much larger industrial base. My case has the full backing of Newport borough council, which, within the last few days, officially communicated its view to the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): As the other Member who has the honour to represent the town of Newport, I congratulate my hon. Friend on initiating this debate. Does he think that the excuse that has been given in the past for not allowing Newport the status of a city is likely to be repeated? Does he accept the excuse that it must be tied to a certain royal occasion?

Mr. Hughes: I hope that our application will be favourably considered and that our request will be granted. It has not escaped my notice that the Home Secretary has to make the official recommendation to Her Majesty the Queen and that he is a true son of Newport.

I trust that the House will soon authorise the construction of the second Severn crossing at Caldicot, in my constituency. The whole area is to undergo vast development to coincide with the major changes in 1992 in the trading arrangements of the European Community. In that year, Her Majesty the Queen will celebrate the 40th anniversary of her accession to the throne, and on such occasions honours of the kind sought by Newport tend to be conferred.

Wales has three cities: Cardiff, Swansea and the tiny cathedral city of St. David's. The granting of city status to Newport would give a new dignity and status to Newport and to the whole county of Gwent and it would help to ensure future prosperity. I trust that my request and that of Newport borough council, backed by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), will be favourably considered and that the Leader of the House will bring the matter to the attention of the Home Secretary and of the Secretary of State for Wales.

6.24 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Before the end of the debate on the Adjournment, I should like to share with the House some of my anxieties. Having listened to the speech by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) I have no anxieties about the future of Newport because it is clearly in extremely good hands. My anxieties relate directly to the hospital service, which appears to be in the process of significant reduction, not only over the immediate Christmas period but well into the new year.

I know that many hon. Members have received representations from doctors and nurses in their constituencies, and I should like to share with the House some of the representations that I have had from my part of the world, south Hampshire. I shall start with representations from Southampton and South West Hampshire health authority which is, of course, a teaching authority. The consultant in charge of the intensive care unit at Southampton general hospital states:

"I am writing to express deep concern about the effects that current Government policies are having on health care provision in Southampton. My particular worry is the inadequate provision of intensive care facilities. This has been a longstanding problem locally, but has reached crisis proportions with managers having to balance their books by the 1st April deadline."

A leading geriatric hospital in my constituency has a team of some of the best psycho-geriatricians in the country. In a letter to me it said:

"The staffing levels on our long stay wards cannot now function safely, let alone achieve quality standards, above 75 per cent. occupancy . . . This places more strain on the community end of the service in which the only elasticity is by consultants and community psychiatric nurses working even longer hours."

Some major work of national and international importance is taking place in our admirable paediatrics department. The director of that service states:

"For the first time in the Children's Service in Southampton's history, waiting lists will rapidly generate, particularly for Paediatric surgery. Disillusionment and anger, at all the levels of staff, are already running at a high level and these manoeuvres will accentuate that."

Representations that I have had from Winchester at the other end of my constituency tell a similar story. Any hon. Member who thinks that we in south Hampshire are particularly unlucky or that the two districts from which I quoted are ill-managed should look at the latest report from the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts which expresses great anxiety. In its report earlier this year the association warned:

"At a probable 8% to 9% this year inflation will wipe out the cash increase received by the hospital and community services."

It is not easy for Back-Benchers to assess fully and fairly the various pressures bearing upon the standard of service in different parts of the national health service. A Select Committee can bring some attention to the problem and hon. Members will agree that the old Select Committee on Social Services did that. We monitored the whole question of the financing of the national health service reasonably well and, I hope, to the satisfaction of the House.

A new Committee is to be set up and as a member of that Committee I must express my deep sense of frustration that the new Select Committee has been prevented from functioning by the blocking actions of some Scottish Liberals whose names are on the Order Paper. I understand that they feel strongly about the lack of a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and that that has been a continuing quarrel between them and the Government. I do not have the temerity to attempt to interfere with a Scotsman, let alone a Scotswoman, who is enjoying a good quarrel, especially with the Government. However, I object strongly when that quarrel leads to the frustration of two other Select Committees, both of which are charged to oversee the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society. I am astonished that Scottish Liberals are being so mean, instead of exhibiting some Christmas spirit.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is there not a double irony in that the old Select Committee did good work in scrutinising health and social provision in Scotland?

Sir David Price: The hon. Gentleman was a loyal and faithful member of the old Committee and I hope to work with him on the new one. He is right. The conduct of the Scottish Liberals puts me in mind of the words of Rabbie Burns:

"Naebody cares for me
I care for naebody".

They are showing that they do not care for anybody. I do care, and that is why I insist that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House tells us what he intends to do to ovecome the obstruction of the Scottish Liberals. If they persist, they will be renamed the Scottish meanies. When will our two Select Committees be allowed to do their duty to the House?

As for the problems in our hospitals which give rise to my anxiety, I hope that they will be discussed during the first of our debates on the Consolidated Fund Bill, which is being initiated by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). Therefore, I absolve my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House from replying to my points as I would otherwise invite him to do, because I am sure that a Minister from the Department of Health will reply to the hon. Lady. Furthermore, I trust that whoever has the honour to reply to the debate will be able to resolve our anxieties. We need a fairy godmother, not a demon king.

6.31 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): As a Liberal, I can partly answer for my hon. Friends, but as only partly a Scot, I probably cannot give an adequate response. In any event, the debate is about other things. The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) knows that the remedy lies not with us but with the Government. They could set up a Scottish Select Committee but have not done so and they could secure a debate on the subject any time by the arrangement of business.

The motion that we are debating will allow the House to rise from tomorrow until 14 January. If we required ourselves to stay here until the homeless were housed and

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the badly housed were properly housed, we might be here for quite some time. I do not think that we would be here indefinitely, because we would have solved the problem, in that a major factor is that the Government walk away from the problem of the homeless and the badly housed too often. They allow people to go on suffering.

On Saturday this week in my constituency, yet again, for the fourth time in recent years, the charity that used to be called Crisis at Christmas and is now called Crisis will open Christmas shelters and about 1,000 people will come off the streets for several days of warmth, food, general rehabilitation and reclothing. In the past few days, I have invited the Prime Minister and the newly appointed Minister for Housing and Planning to come to meet the homeless at Crisis. The Minister has accepted and will come on Monday. I welcome that. I understand that the Prime Minister would like to come, but so far has been unable to arrange a time to do so. I hope that he can, even if it is on one of the few days after Christmas rather than the few days before Christmas.

If Ministers come, they will realise anew what they know in their minds and in logic, which is that we in Britain have failed thousands of people in respect of housing for far too long. This is the leading sentence in the editorial in *The Times* today:

"The plight of the homeless is a clear test of John Major's social conscience."

It also quotes Mother Teresa, who

"spoke for many when she said that the sight of people sleeping rough in Europe was, to her, worse than its counterpart in the Third World."

The Government keep on saying that they have a commitment to give everybody a decent home. The former Secretary of State for the Environment, now the chairman of the Tory party, said so only a year ago, but the figures get worse. There are certainly 5,000 people—there may be more—who sleep rough all the time, about half in London and half elsewhere. That is a 50 per cent. increase in two years. There are certainly 43,000 people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, put there by the 100 local authorities which have accepted liability for housing them.

Acceptances of people as homeless have doubled in the past 10 years. There are 200,000 people homeless and alone, and 300,000 people homeless and in temporary accommodation—possibly as many as 1 million. The figures rise inexorably. By that I imply that a short-term alleviation by providing hostel space for up to 1,000 people will make hardly any significant dent in that trend.

The reasons for homelessness do not change. The Library has provided me with a collection of information which confirms that, since 1979, the reasons why people become homeless have remained much the same. Some 40 per cent. do so because relatives or friends can no longer accommodate them, and 15 per cent. because of a breakdown in relationship with a partner. A growing number do so because of mortgage arrears—this doubled between 1979-89. Some 80 per cent. are accepted because there are dependent children or a pregnant woman in the household.

Over the past 10 years, we have gone on doing things that make the problem worse. We have reduced the number of new homes that we build, we have built for demand and not for need and we have not changed the planning laws as we might have done. The right-to-buy policy, which was recently criticised again by the bishops, has taken housing away from the rented sector. We have forced local authorities to hold on to capital receipts that they are willing to spend.

In the Housing Act 1988, we deregulated what were market rents and as Opposition Members, including myself, predicted, we forced rents up and thereby forced many people out of being able to afford them. Now, we do not allow social security to pay for people in expensive rented property or let them have the money that they need to pay a deposit for rented accommodation. Homelessness is rising, and the prediction made by the permanent secretary at the Department of the Environment to the Public Accounts Committee only a few days ago confirmed that it will increase by another 15 per cent. this year.

More homes are being repossessed. More were repossessed in the past six months than in the whole of the previous year. Rent increases are rising and for many people that is added to the poll tax bill. At the same time, 100,000 council properties and 600,000 private properties are empty. The Government recently said that they would prevent private leasing—a remedy that we know is cheaper than bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

I do not doubt that every single one of the 650 Members of Parliament could regale others with tales of people who come to us saying that they are without housing or badly housed. I shall cite only one example. A couple with six children—five boys aged between 5 and 14 and a baby girl—live, as they have done for 11 years, in a council flat in Walworth, a mile and a half from here. They have been trying to get out from that small substandard and damp flat. It may be that, with the last baby, they are statutorily overcrowded. They were recently offered a desquatted property, but that was subsequently resquatted and is therefore no longer available.

Tens of thousands of people are not homeless or on the streets, but are housed in conditions that a civilised society should not permit. There are remedies. It is possible to find solutions and implement them. We could repeal our vagrancy legislation. We could alter the rules that bear on the rented sector. We could prevent the poverty trap from affecting those who find themselves just above housing benefit and benefit levels generally. We could alter planning rules so that local authorities are able to insist that a certain proportion of any housing development is used to provide homes for rents at affordable levels. We could remove mortgage tax relief from those who are higher rate taxpayers and use the money for other purposes.

We could ensure that those who are without homes are able to receive social security payments in advance so that they do not have to survive for weeks without money. We could make it a requirement that empty property is let without affecting its ownership. Notice of intention to let could be served on private and local authority owners alike. We could retain private sector leasing but try to ensure that no abuses took place. We could extend our obligations to ensure that the young are housed by law rather than leaving discretion with the local authority.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Having recently returned from Germany, I ask the hon. Gentleman to agree that we need not always do what foreigners do. In every locality that I visited, however, Christian Democrat representatives—Conservatives—told me that they still

insist on having a minimum number of council dwellings constructed every year to contain the various problems with which they are confronted. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that every Member of this place, no matter which constituency he represents, could do with that sort of council house construction, regardless of politics, to contain the problem? If we do not return to council house building on a modest scale, as in Germany, which is the premier capitalist colony of Europe, we are doomed never to be able to solve the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I am glad that I gave way to him. He says, in effect, that none of us could dissent from the view that there is a desperate shortage of rented accommodation at affordable prices, whether that is provided directly by local authorities or indirectly through housing associations. The political argument is far less important than the housing shortage. There is a desperate shortage of rented accommodation at affordable prices throughout the country. It is not sufficient to say that the market should be left to meet the need, because it has failed to do so.

There are many European or international problems that cannot be resolved by one Government alone. The problem of housing the homeless in Britain is not one of those, however, and the Government of the United Kingdom have no excuse if they do not solve the problem, however complex the solution may be.

The Leader of the House will have read, I am sure, that young members of the Churches are beginning a vigil today on the streets of London to mark their opposition to the prospect of war in the Gulf and to show that they are in favour of peace. It is linked with the Churches' calls for prayers for peace over Christmas. People in Britain, and the Government especially, have taken a strong view about the attack that has been carried out by the Iraqi Government on the Government and people of Kuwait. It is only right that a strong view should be taken. If we as a people and a Government had at least as strong a view on the attack on the freedoms of people in this country, who we are condemning to poverty, homelessness or bad housing, we would solve the problems to which I have referred.

The young people who are participating in the vigil will voluntarily be joining on the streets many who are not there by choice. Historically, Christmas may be best celebrated by being without a home, but in a civilised and modern society the reality is that we should be able to provide everyone with one. It is about time that Parliament made sure that its Members did not go on holiday to comfortable homes until everyone else in the country had been provided with the opportunity of going safely home as well.

6.45 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): The plight and the condition of elderly people will worsen as the cold weather becomes colder and prices continue to rise in the shops. I pay tribute to those in my constituency who are collecting items of food, especially at the doors of supermarkets, to use to make Christmas parcels for the elderly. Many young people are involved in that charitable work and their dedication deserves special recognition.

With all the activity of the Christmas season, people are inclined to forget that our senior citizens may be having a difficult time. Some face spending Christmas day alone at home. The shops may be piled high with all sorts of delectable food but the pensioner who has only the old age pension on which to live will face the recurring problem of deciding what he or she can afford to spend on meals and other necessities. The shops may be ablaze with electric lighting, with a seemingly wanton disregard for the cost, but in the homes of the elderly there will be a cautious use of an electric fire, for example, which can quickly demand all the money which the pensioner has allocated for heating. Rarely do we hear senior citizens complaining bitterly, but their needs require more consideration than we currently give them.

Television is the only form of entertainment for many people. It provides a window through which they can observe the world at large. It provides companionship for the lonely as well as entertainment. In other words, it is good for the morale of the elderly and the lonely, and what is good for their morale must be good for their state of health. That is why I repeat once again, and without apology, a passionate plea to the Government to provide free television licenses for pensioners.

It is imperative that pensioners should be encouraged to remain, if at all possible, in their own homes rather than removing themselves to residential homes. So long as they can fend for themselves, with adequate assistance from carers and visiting doctors and nurses, home is the best place for them. Pensioners are less likely to become disorientated if they remain in the house they know, with all their possessions, in an area they know and where they are known. This means providing more carers to look after the elderly, and that provision is vital.

It must be emphasised, however, that numerous pensioners can manage well on their own, without assistance from outside, providing that they receive sufficient money to pay for proper heating and sufficient food, but there must be something extra. They need and deserve to be treated with sympathy and understanding.

I shall refer to one example to highlight the callous way in which the elderly are sometimes treated. Last weekend, a pensioner of 69 years of age appealed to me for help. The lady, who lives alone, was feeling desperate. In my opinion, she had every right to be distraught. She lives in an old cottage where she was born. Her 69 years have been spent in that cottage, her only home. Until her father's death, he had worked on the estate of which the cottage is part. The cottage was provided for him, his wife and his daughter. When he died, about 20 years ago, the agent for the trustees of the estate made an offer to his daughter that she could dispense with paying rent if she accepted responsibility for all repairs to the cottage.

I think that that was a deliberately astute move on the part of the landlord. It was made to avoid the landlord accepting rent and to burden my constituent with the cost of repairs which she could never hope to meet. When the move was made, the cottage was already very old and sub-standard. It was in acute need of extensive renovation work. The lady was unable to pay for major repairs. If the agents had accepted rent, it would have been extremely low in view of the condition of the cottage. If they had accepted rent, the lady should have gone to the trustees to force them to make the cottage satisfy minimum standards.

I shall describe the cottage. It has no kitchen. There is a cooker sitting in the living room. There is no supply of water in the cottage. There is no tap, either inside or outside. There is no bathroom and no lavatory, either

[Mr. James Kilfedder]

inside or outside the cottage, other than an old earth closet. No work has been carried out on the cottage since it was built in the last century. Presumably her father would have lost his job on the estate if he had had the temerity to complain about the conditions in the cottage. The only modern convenience is electricity, which the lady's mother had installed at her own expense.

Those matters should have been dealt with by the trustees of the estate many, many years ago. Windows and doors have rotted and need replacing; wooden floors need to be replaced; the plaster both inside and outside the cottage is cracking; and there is rising damp in all the rooms. The agents for the trustees of the estate knew about those conditions, but did nothing. They are now using them as an excuse for turning an elderly woman out of her home. Once she is out, no doubt they will sell the half acre of land in which the cottage sits, and at the cost of her misery they will make a substantial sum of money, because it is in such a beautiful setting. To her credit, the elderly lady has maintained the place to the best of her ability.

The trustees of that large estate are not interested—and, in my opinion, never were interested—in renovating the cottage. They want to get that poor lady out of the home in which she was born and in which she has lived all her life. The cottage could be renovated at a cost of about £9,000. Most of that would be funded by a grant from the Housing Executive. Instead of that, the agents for the trustees of that large estate—which is not short of a pound or two—asked the public health officer for a demolition order on the cottage.

Anyone acquainted with the case will know that the agents wanted an order so that the cottage could be demolished, and the woman would have to go somewhere else to live. They would then be free to make full use of the land. The lady has been offered a tenancy by the Housing Executive, but it is an hour's walk from the church with which she has been associated throughout her life. She has made that church the centre of her life and she is involved in all the church activities. She is an active member of the local women's institute. If she cannot attend those activities, she will feel isolated. That is disgraceful.

Where is there any sign of compassion in these sordid events? The lady has pleaded with the agents for the trustees not to take away her home. I join her in that plea in this House. I urge the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to intervene and rescind the demolition order. The trustees should be persuaded to apply for public money —they do not need to use their own money, even though they have sufficient funds—to put the cottage in order. That will allow that 69-year-old lady to spend the twilight of her years in the cottage in which she was born. Of course, in due course the trustees will be able to sell the property, so they will benefit substantially in the long term.

6.54 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I think that the House listened with a great deal of sympathy to the constituency case outlined by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder). We hope that there will be a happy outcome and that the Leader of the House will urgently refer the matter to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for North Down was correct to raise issues concerning the welfare of the elderly. He may know that earlier today my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) introduced a Bill——

Mr. Kilfedder: I was here.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman will have heard the arguments. He mentioned the need for free or concessionary television licences for the elderly. When I came first in the ballot, I introduced a Bill to that effect on 16 January 1987. I was willing to reach a compromise with the Government. If they had said that they would settle on half the licence fee, I would have accepted that as a first step. My Bill was voted down by 21 votes. We all saw on television Cabinet Ministers in their chauffeur-driven cars coming from only a few yards away to vote to deny the elderly free or concessionary television licences. It is argued that two thirds of pensioners—the statistics bear out the argument—live either in poverty or near it, yet the Government were not willing to give me any support. Far from it, they voted down my Bill.

Much needs to be done, including —*[Interruption.]* —I hope that the Leader of the House will give me his attention for a moment—urgent action on cold weather payments. As I said earlier this week, the arrangements are far too inflexible. Hon. Members should note how warm it is in the Chamber and how we all try to keep our homes warm. It may not be freezing, but it is cold enough to need to keep homes warm. People on low incomes are in an impossible position.

I atteneded a meeting here today called by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North. One pensioner told us that her total income was £45 a week. That is the income of many of my pensioner constituents. Of course, out of that they have to pay about £10 a week in rent. There is urgent need for a more generous cold weather payment. Even when the payment is triggered, and there are all sorts of conditions associated with that, it is only £5 a week. That is hardly generous. We must bear in mind what the hon. Member for North Down and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North said about the immense suffering of elderly people on limited incomes when the weather turns really cold.

This debate was initiated by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), a former Leader of the House. He referred to the recession. That recession is hitting the west midlands and the black country very hard. There have been announcements in my constituency of imminent factory closures, and those will involve a great number of redundancies. We suffered a great deal 10 years ago. Many factories in the west midlands were closed, never to be reopened. Indeed, in many cases housing estates and shopping centres have been built on former industrial sites.

A number of people who were made redundant at the time have never been able to work again because of their age. As the right hon. Gentleman said, there is a justified fear that manufacturing industry will be particularly hard hit again. There is little sign that there will be any let-up in 1991. All the signs are that the recession will deepen and we may be in the same position, or close to the position that we were in 10 years ago because of Government policies. The first and most obvious need is for interest rates to be lowered.

I wish to refer to two other matters. Amnesty International published a report today on the events in Kuwait since the occupation of that country on 2 August. I do not think that anyone would be so silly as to believe that Amnesty International has some sort of bias, other than against those who are indicted in its reports. It comes as no surprise to me to learn that the Iraqi embassy in London has described the report as a fabrication. The report deals with the atrocities of the occupying forces in Kuwait, including gouging out eyes and cutting off ears.

The report says that there is evidence that 300 premature babies were left to die after Iraqi troops looted incubators in hospitals. It also goes into considerable details of other atrocities that have been carried out in the past four months. No one can be surprised about that. They have been carried out by a criminal and terrorist regime which has maintained a state of terror inside Iraq itself for the past 10 to 15 years. No one will be surprised that such atrocities followed the criminal invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

I loathe war as much as anyone else. My hatred of war is second to none. But I am not a pacifist, and the way in which war can be avoided is simple and clear—for Saddam Hussein to withdraw his troops from Kuwait by the deadline set by the United Nations Security Council.

When the House was recalled in September I said that sanctions should be given time to work. I also made the point that any partial withdrawal would be completely unacceptable. It must be unacceptable to the United Nations and the international community for Saddam Hussein to withdraw from one part of Kuwait but to remain in the rest. There can be no question of trying to save his face. There was no justification for the invasion in the first place. Only a total withdrawal from Kuwait could satisfy the international community.

The dictator and mass murderer who rules Iraq is making a grave mistake if he believes that the debate occurring in the democracies, including Britain, means that the allies are not firmly resolved. He says that he is frightened of an attack on Iraq. Again, the remedy lies in his own hands. If he withdraws by the deadline set by the United Nations, there can be no attack and no justification for any armed attack. But the withdrawal from Kuwait must take place.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has aired his views, as he has every right to do, and as I am doing now, in the House of Commons and elsewhere. But when I listen to him arguing about whether the borders were correct in the first place and so on, I am rather sickened. The right hon. Gentleman is to give evidence to a Senate sub-committee in the United States. As I say, he is perfectly entitled to his views. They are shared by some people in Britain. But they are not shared by the large majority of the British people who know that what took place on 2 August was unjustified outright criminal aggression.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Much of what my hon. Friend has said would be very much at home on the lips of Conservative Back Benchers. Does he agree that there has been no testing of public opinion on the simple question of whether people want war in the present circumstances? If there was such a test, there is no guarantee that, as he says, a majority would say yes.

Mr. Winnick: All the evidence confirms my point of view. I hope that my hon. Friend will reflect carefully on what he has said. Opposition to fascism and criminal agression is longstanding in the Labour movement, and one of the accusations that we have made against the Tories on numerous occasions is that when they were not instigating criminal aggression, as in Suez in 1956 in collusion with France and Israel, they were appeasing it. Therefore, I do not require any lectures from my hon. Friend.

My second point is one which must concern the House. That is the plight of the homeless and those who are not necessarily homeless but who are in great need of secure accommodation. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) intervened during the speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to say that the crisis will never be dealt with until the Government allow local authorities to start building again; that is correct. The present housing crisis is precisely due to the fact that since 1979 local authorities have not been able to fulfil their basic housing responsibilities.

Yesterday, the Minister for Housing and Planning said that the Government remain of the view that councils should not build family housing—so much for the useful intervention of the hon. Member for Harrow, East. The Government's housing policy remains what it was under the former Prime Minister. The Minister went on to say that housing associations can do the job. I do not believe that housing associations can carry out the same full responsibilities as local authorities. In 1978, there were 20,500 housing association starts. In 1989, there were just 13,700. That shows that there has been a marked decline even in housing association starts. In 1978, there were 76,700 local authority starts and this year, up to October, there were 7,800.

There are people sleeping on our streets and it is scandalous that so many families are forced to live in squalid bed-and-breakfast hostels. There is no justification for that. But there are many other people not in that dire situation, who visit or write to their Members of Parliament—couples who live with their parents or in-laws or people living in multi-storey flats who, even with two children, still have to wait far too long.

The remedy is clear. Local authorities should be able to do the job that they did until the Government took office. I beg the Government to recognise that the problem simply cannot be resolved until local authorities are once again allowed to do what they cannot do now. In my borough, because of Government restrictions, there have been no new local authority housing starts since 1979. If we are really worried about housing, we know where the remedy lies.

7.6 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): I hope that the House will agree that it would be wrong to adjourn for the Christmas recess without a further mention of sea defence and coastal protection, particularly in the light of the terrifying floods, the tides, the chilling flood warnings, the damage and the road closures that the Suffolk and Norfolk coasts suffered last week. We expect winter to give us a battering, but this winter it came early and with a vengeance that we have not felt for some time.

When Towyn was engulfed by the sea, it was only the direction of the wind that spared east Anglia. Last

[Mr. David Porter]

Wednesday's high tides were marked by those who remember the 1953 floods as very nearly as bad. It will be remembered that in England and Holland in 1953 some 2,000 people died.

I pay tribute to the people in Southwold, Easton Bavents, Oulton Broad, Lowestoft, Beccles and elsewhere in my constituency and in other parts of Suffolk and Norfolk who were evacuated, flooded, suffered damage and inconvenience and generally suffered loss of all kinds, save only death on this occasion. I also pay tribute to the officials of Waveney district council, the National Rivers Authority and the emergency services.

If I could give my remarks a title of my own choosing for tomorrow's *Hansard*, it would be "This Vulnerable Coast"—like the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", but without the glossy paper.

Those of us who live on the coast of east Anglia have always lived with the threat of the sea. Over the years the battle has generally been lost and substantial parts have gone for ever. Dunwich, that infamous rotten borough, sent two Members to the House until 1932, even though most of it had even then been washed into the North sea.

What is most feared is the storm surge. A surge in the North sea is caused when the weather upsets the normal pattern of tides. A northerly gale blowing across the surface of the sea tries to take the water with it, or lower atmospheric pressure in a severe depression draws up the water, and a wind-driven current piles up a massive sea. The curved rotation of the earth curves the current. It is funnelled by the shape and depth of the North sea, and when that continuous wall of angry water hits the coast square on we are in trouble. Most sea defences are built for the higher spring tides and do not usually cater for freak conditions—and the surge is a freak.

Some experts have argued that we can expect devastating surges once every 25 years, but the scientific evidence for that is flimsy. Reports published only last weekend suggest that the North sea is getting rougher, which may be due to global warming. Wave increases of more than 20 per cent. in the past 30 years have been measured in the Atlantic, and the North sea is now being studied. Computers and experts should be able to give us better predictions soon of storm surge dangers.

What do those predictions count for? We still have, in the main, defences that are coming to the end of their useful lives. In fairness, most have held up fairly well so far. My observations have been made many times previously in the House, by other right hon. and hon. Members—and twice this year alone. I have spoken about that worrying matter.

On both occasions, I raised the specific case of the hamlet of Easton Bavents, which is north of Southwold. Waveney district council this year refused planning permission for a scheme that would have secured the cliff, putting forward cost and environmental objections. Neither the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food nor the Department of the Environment could, or would, step in.

The cost argument remained on the table, but the environmental argument was wider. Do we as a nation want part of our coasts to erode naturally? If so, which parts—and how do we draw a line and defend other parts of our coasts? I am sorry to report that, following last week's weather, last Friday morning I stood and watched as an end cottage was demolished before it toppled on to the beach below. It was a holiday home, but the next property under sentence of death from the district council, before it meets the cliff edge, is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Liddell, who retired there two years ago. They had been evacuated to a council house in Reydon and are shattered. They had invested all their life savings in their property, having also been told that the house would, with a scheme below it, be good for 40 years. They have agreed to the property being demolished, and I understand that the council began that work this afternoon.

More houses will share the same fate, and if enough of that sand cliff goes, the sea will break right through to lower land behind, outflanking the Southwold sea wall. Southwold would then become an island, Reydon would be exposed to danger, and marshes would be lost under salt water. Will the National Rivers Authority have stepped in by then to lengthen its Southwold sea wall into an area that is the responsibility of Waveney district council—or will I have to report further losses in future debates, at Kessingland, Pakefield and Corton, along my coastline? There are too many questions, and too many maybes.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is to respond to the debate, because he once had ministerial responsibility for such matters and, as a neighbouring parliamentary colleague, he is also familiar with the area in question. He will appreciate that the issue is complicated if one adds rivers and land drainage to the picture that I have painted. My right hon. Friend will know also that time is not on our side. I have pressed him before, and will do so again, for an updating of the Coast Protection Act 1949, to introduce four new provisions.

First, let us provide compensation to be built into the structure of sea defence management—as it is in planning, development and industry—so that people living in vulnerable areas and who cannot insure themselves will not lose everything. Secondly, let us provide for a national sea defence strategy for the United Kingdom that draws on local knowledge, history, expertise and authorities in devising a plan of what is economically, socially and environmentally saveable by environmentally efficient means—giving overall responsibility for that to the NRA instead of to the umpteen different bodies that currently each do a bit, or do not. Local authorities in the eastern areas are working towards that end themselves. Let us go one stage further and make such a strategy compulsory.

Thirdly, let us provide for better controls on local authorities, to prevent further developments of any kind within areas that are deemed to be vulnerable, environmentally desirable to erode, or to be defended to a smaller extent—all within the terms of the national strategy that I just mentioned. Fourthly, let us provide for a proper channel of action and response—from people on the ground to police, local authorities, and the NRA—to keep to a minimum any delays in closing roads and evacuating homes when water floods through, as it surely will, even with a national strategy.

Finally, let us examine the question of funding all that sea defence. I will quote in support of my arguments two editorials from the *Eastern Daily Press*. The first was published last Thursday, the morning after the storm, under the headline

"Put Whitehall on flood alert."

It stated:

"With East Anglian coastal and riverside communities last night under siege, the issue of the financing and organisation of sea defences assumes a chilling immediacy. A £40 million programme for this part of the coast faces a cutback unless Norfolk and Suffolk county councils commit more than the inflation-linked increase they are thus far prepared to contribute.

The recently-announced doubling in annual support is a further encouraging sign that politicians are at last recognising the enormous, urgent dimensions of the flood threat around our coast. Even so, funding is below the level many experts regard as the minimum to keep existing defences in good repair, let alone develop the extensions necessary to meet new climatic threats."

The second editorial appeared on Monday, after my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food toured stricken areas in my constituency and in his own neighbouring constituency, and defended the 70 per cent. national, 30 per cent. local split of sea defence funding. That editorial reported that my right hon. Friend "cautioned critics of Britain's sea defence programmes that a balance must be struck between national and local funding. It is not clear why a small island like Britain should regard the protection of its coastline in these them-and-us terms."

My right hon. Friend commented that maritime local authorities gain from sea defence and so have an interest in them. Is the Royal Navy's defence of Britain a 30 per cent. charge on maritime local authorities? Of course not. The article concluded:

"It is unreasonable to equate interest with ability to contribute almost a third to the vast capital costs. Our own preference is for the national comprehensive strategy which Mr. Gummer finds unnecessary. But even if we are to accept the system now in place, more urgency, imagination and, not least, more money are needed if Britain is to hold back the sea."

I wrote to my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for the Environment asking him to examine the 70 per cent. to 30 per cent. split when he reviews local government finance.

No one seriously expects the dream of permanent, unbreachable sea and flood protection ever to come true, but our coastal defences can be organised in such a way as to give us more confidence that warnings can save life and keep damage to a minimum—but only if we get on with that task now.

7.16 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The House will appreciate why the hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) raised a matter of constituency interest, but he supports a Government who were one of the slowest in the world to react to the problems of global warming, which have hastened coastal erosion. There is a rumour that the Government will disappoint many children this Christmas by imprisoning Father Christmas for non-payment of his North pole tax. Whatever the truth of that rumour, the House should not adjourn until the Government have made a commitment completely to abolish the poll tax.

I want to raise an even more serious issue—that of murder—but because it is occurring in another part of the world, it is hardly ever discussed in the House. I refer to murder in Sri Lanka, which is a deeply troubled country. In fact, it is the murder capital of the world. Atrocities occur there daily, and bodies are flowing in the rivers. I welcome Amnesty International's campaign to draw attention to the situation in that sad country, which has not been properly debated in this place for a very long time —despite the detentions, disappearances, executions and indiscriminate aerial bombing of villages that have occurred there. There have also been human rights violations on a huge scale, and civil liberties have been described as a sick joke.

All sides in the troubles have been party to that, including the Tamil Tigers, JVP, the Indian peacekeeping force and the Sri Lankan Government themselves. Regulation 55FF gave the security forces power to dispose of bodies without notifying the victims' relatives or arranging inquests. That measure has been repealed, but the practices continue.

There have been 30,000 deaths in Sri Lanka over the past seven years and a new wave of violence since the Indian peacekeeping force left at the end of March. In the north-east, about 30,000 people were forced to abandon their homes in June alone, and in August, 140 Muslims were massacred at two mosques in Batticaloa. Now the Muslims are thinking of establishing a paramilitary force in addition to all the others that exist. One Tamil Member of Parliament reports 4,000 deaths since June. We have not found time to discuss that in the House. The truth is that the Sri Lankan Government are involved in a policy of genocide, ostensibly to annihilate the Tamil Tigers. The Government's motivation is the fear that if they do not do so, there will be an army coup and they will be removed from power. In reality, they are killing millions of Tamils —a whole population is under threat.

The Sri Lankan Government were faced with a choice between genocide or a bloody military stalemate, and they have chosen genocide—both are totally unacceptable. The situation is intractable, but efforts must be made to try to get a settlement. Amnesty International is right to demand action from the United Kingdom Government, the Common Market, the United Nations and the international community.

Human rights must be a basic condition of any aid given by this country, or the Common Market, and aid should be monitored by the donor Governments to ensure that that is the case. The Sri Lankan Government should be required to work with the United Nations. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights has demanded that Sri Lanka end its sponsored terror. The army must be brought under control and told that the people responsible for the killings, to which I referred, will be made accountable. There should be fresh elections, internationally guaranteed by the UN, for the purpose of negotiating a settlement, and thereby people elected to represent the Tamils will be viewed as partners, not as enemies. A solution should be along the lines of a federal, decentralised state, but that is for negotiations to decide.

If that happened we could consider aid for development and the rehabilitation of displaced people. We should make it quite clear that there would be lots of aid for a peaceful democracy in Sri Lanka but very little—perhaps none—if the military took over.

The Home Office must also get the message. It is unacceptable for it to send refugees back to their deaths, and it is also unacceptable that it has not provided a single penny to local authorities which take in refugees and try to help them. That costs a lot of money, and it brings me back to the subject of the poll tax. That extra money is added on to the poll tax, and the Government should provide some money.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech, outlining the horrors of what is happening in Sri Lanka. Does he agree that, by

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

providing arms and military advisers, and indeed by allowing private security companies to operate in Sri Lanka, the British Government have exacerbated the situation, rather than brought us nearer to peace? Does he think that, at the very least, the Government should establish a total embargo on arms trade with Sri Lanka?

Mr. Cohen: I agree with my hon. Friend. The sale of arms in such circumstances is nothing short of a scandal.

I hope that the Leader of the House will take up the issues that I have raised with the Government, so that they will take action to try to end the dreadful killings in a country which used to be known as a paradise.

7.24 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Before we adjourn for the Christmas recess, I ask the House to redress an injustice to community charge payers in the borough of Gravesham. This injustice is contained in the revenue support grant settlement for 1991-92, and has continued for many years—I refer to the allocation of districts to different designations for London and fringe allowances. The revenue support grant is adjusted accordingly.

These allowances have existed for many years. Originally, they were based upon the Metropolitan police district, before the establishment of Greater London in 1965. In 1971, a distinction was made between inner and outer London, and in 1974 a network of neighbouring districts were grouped into inner and outer fringe areas. There have been no changes to those designations since 1974—they have been well and truly set in cement. The definitions are inaccurate and fundamentally unfair simply because of geography.

Gravesend is about 22 miles from Charing Cross, as the crow flies. It is the administrative centre of the borough of Gravesham, which is ruled outside of any allowance area. To clarify the injustice I could show hon. Members the pretty multi-coloured map that I have here but, as that cannot be put in *Hansard*, I shall try to illustrate the situation with words.

Let us circumnavigate the metropolis in an anti-clockwise direction, 22 miles out from Charing Cross. Across the Thames northwards lies Thurrock, which is an outer fringe borough. To the east lies Basildon, which is some 30 miles out, and is also an outer fringe borough. They are both funded accordingly. Further round lies Brentwood, which is an outer fringe borough, Epping Forest, which is an inner fringe borough, and Harlow, which is outer fringe. We then come to the southern reaches of east Hertfordshire, an area which stretches northwards 50 miles from Charing Cross, and is classified as an outer fringe district.

Further round, we find Welwyn-Hatfield, St. Albans, Dacorum and Chiltern, which are all outer fringe districts. Next is south Buckinghamshire, which is not exactly poverty-stricken—it is considered an inner fringe area. Then we go through Surrey. The whole of that county receives fringe allowance funding, and four of its districts are funded as inner fringe areas. Even Waverley, on the borders of Hampshire, which is more than 30 miles from Charing Cross, is considered to be a fringe district. Crawley, in west Sussex, is 30 miles out and is a fringe borough.

In my county of Kent, Sevenoaks and Dartford are cosily within the fringe—Dartford is classified within the inner fringe. Gravesham, uniquely, is left out.

What effect does that have? Gravesham borough council is a well-run borough. It gives a high standard of service within a tightly controlled budget. Its effectiveness can be judged by the community charge set this year, which was £293 and compares very well with the English average of £357.

Nevertheless, Gravesham council achieves that within one of the most expensive parts of the country for housing and general living costs. The cost of housing in Gravesham is little different from that in the Kentish borough of Dartford, which is funded as an inner fringe district, and the London borough of Bexley, which receives the even better outer London allowance.

To ensure that the quality of staff is maintained, that vacancies can be competitively filled and that current staff are fairly treated, Gravesham borough council has unilaterally resolved to pay its staff the allowance. The cost has been added to community charge payers' bill.

Were Gravesham an outer fringe borough—as would seem right and proper judging by geography alone—our grant would be £300,000 higher. If we were classified as an inner fringe district, as is our neighbour Dartford, we would be £600,000 better off, which translates to £4 or £8 respectively off the community charge bills in Gravesham.

In the meantime, we are saddled with the cost, and local employees of the county council are saddled with the additional injustice of not receiving a territorial allowance in their pay. It is worth noting that teachers and other county council employees in the north-west Kent division who work in Dartford borough—at Swanscombe or Southfleet—get an inner fringe pay allowance, but those who work in education or other county services in the eastern part of the same division, at Gravesend or Northfleet, receive no allowance whatsoever.

The territorial divisions around London which I mentioned a few moments ago were introduced by the Labour Government in 1974. The present Conservative Government have corrected or rejected so much of their complicated inheritance from Labour: I hope very much that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will ensure that yet another step is taken to rid my constituents of this remaining injustice.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The Front-Bench spokesmen hope to catch my eye at 7.45 pm. Three hon. Members are still rising in the hope of speaking in the current debate. I hope that they will divide the available time between them, which allows them five minutes apiece.

7.29 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): In fact, four hon. Members are hoping to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall therefore be brief.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) amazes me. He has suddenly discovered that the current local government grant system is based on stupid formulae, that the standard spending assessments are idiotic and biased against a host of authorities, and that the revenue support grant—which we were told at one time would provide 50 per cent. of local government expenditure—does nothing

of the sort: it varies from 3 per cent. in one district to 98 per cent. in another, and my own authority receives only 11 per cent. Those figures were provided in the answer to a parliamentary question that I tabled, but the details were placed in the Library, so they would not be as readily available to hon. Members as they would have been if they had been published in *Hansard*.

Let me turn to the subject of my own speech. Two of my constituents, Ruth and Bev Smith, have adopted a mentally handicapped child from Romania. They are the only couple to have adopted a mentally handicapped child, which must hold some lessons for us. Why have not more mentally handicapped Romanian children been adopted in this country, given the amount of publicity?

The couple's position is exceptional. They already have experience of dealing with mentally handicapped children: they have a mentally handicapped child of their own, and have adopted two others. Because of that, the social services were able to deliver a first-class report. They have also been able to take advantage of a first-class special school, which is run by Derbyshire county council at Inkersall Green—and will continue to be run in the same way if the available resources are not utterly destroyed by the present Government.

The couple have been incredibly determined. They first found out about the problems in Romania in February. Bev Smith visited Romania four times, and eventually contacted me about the problems that he was experiencing with the Home Office and the Foreign Office. Those problems were then resolved, and, once the two Departments understood the nature of the problems, they provided assistance. The couple also obtained the assistance of Mencap in Chesterfield: that assistance was vastly important, because it enabled Emese—the adopted child—not to be deemed a burden on the taxpayer. The Smiths' finances were limited, and the backing of Chesterfield Mencap was therefore essential.

Given the huge amount of publicity and public concern, why is Emese the only mentally handicapped Romanian child who will spend Christmas in this country? Perhaps we should question the extent to which mentally handicapped children can be found in Romanian institutions. Emese is only five, and has made considerable progress since her arrival with the Smiths. In a letter to me, Bev Smith writes:

"I must confess when I was at the Castle at Brincovevenesti it was the hardest decision that I have ever had to make. The fact that Emese grabbed me was the best thing that could have happened for her".

Masses of other children there needed help, but it was Emese who wanted to join that fine family.

The Government should consider the current arrangements in detail.

7.34 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I doubt that any Christmas Adjournment debate would be complete without a speech about road safety. In the short time available, I want to talk about the dangers posed by motorists who drive while simultaneously holding telephones—especially those who charge along the motorway with one hand on the steering wheel and the other holding a car phone, and those who try to guide their cars around roundabouts steering with their knees or elbows because they are using one had to key in a number and the other hand to hold the dialling mechanism.

I have raised this matter a number of times. Sometimes I have been referred to the highway code, which states:

"Do not use a hand held microphone or telephone handset while your vehicle is moving except in an emergency".

It is obvious to me from what I see every day that that sound advice is being flagrantly ignored—and it is only advice; it has no statutory backing.

When I have mentioned the problem to the Department of Transport, I have been told that it can be dealt with adequately by existing legislation, namely section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, which covers driving without due care and attention and driving without reasonable consideration for other road users. I have also been referred to the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, which make it an offence not to be in proper control of a vehicle.

It is true that the existing legislation provides a statutory basis for prosecutions, but that is possible only when the danger has already been caused. It tackles the problem of those who drive carelessly, but does not address itself to the reasons for that careless driving. We need measures that will prevent, or curb, the dangerous practice that may cause accidents, before those accidents happen.

All car telephones should be equipped with remote loudspeakers and microphones, so that drivers can hear and be heard without having to hold receivers to their ears. Secondly, all care telephones should have pre-programmed short-call dialling facilities or voice-activated dialling, so that drivers can make calls without having to hold the dialling mechanism in their hands or take their eyes of the road. These are very modest requirements: many car telephones already in use are already so equipped, and I think that they all should be.

It is evident from the response to my representations that the Department of Transport is not persuaded by my arguments; I predict, however, that in time it will change its mind. In the 1990s, up to 5 million car telephones are likely to be in use; if we include portable personal phones which can be used in cars, the figures will be far higher before the decade is out. That means that, for part of almost every journey, the vehicle involved will be driven with only one hand.

Another menace that looms on the horizon is the use of portable photocopiers and fax machines in motor cars. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) seems astonished, but I can inform her that the machines are positioned on the front passenger seat, and plugged into the cigarette lighter. It may be a convenient facility for a salesman or indeed a politician in a hurry, but there is also too great a temptation to operate the photocopier or fax machine while driving.

Before long, we may have television sets in motor cars. At the moment, they are confined to the back seats of luxury motor cars, but the time may come when they take their place alongside radios on the fascia boards of family motor cars. That will pose a massive threat to road safety. The Secretary of State for Transport ought to take that threat extremely seriously. I urge the Leader of the House to pass to the Secretary of State the message that road safety figures will suffer dramatically unless something is done to stamp out this menace.

7.39 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It would be wrong for the House to adjourn without returning once again to the issue that faces us all. When we return here on 14 January, a war could have begun. There could be shooting in the Gulf, with nuclear weapons on one side and chemical weapons on the other. There is no defence against either form of weapons. If chemical weapons are used, dust clouds will blow a long distance and many will die as a result. If the other side decides that it has been forced into using nuclear weapons, what happened at Chernobyl will be minor compared with the consequences of their use in the Gulf. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has pointed out on many occasions, and as he will do so later tonight, the consequences of fighter planes from Saudi Arabia flying into Kuwait and Iraq to bomb their oilfields will be catastrophic and truly horrific.

No hon. Member is an apologist for Iraq. I am not. On many occasions, I have questioned Iraq's treatment of the Kurdish people, its use of chemical weapons at Al Malkiya in 1988, its oppression of Kurdish rights throughout northern Iraq, the imprisonment of trade unionists and the assassination of those who, over the years, have stood up for human rights in Iraq. In no sense am I an apologist for Iraq, nor do I support anything that the Iraqi regime does.

After Kuwait was invaded on 2 August, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), who was then Prime Minister, rushed across to the United States and cobbled together an arrangement with President Bush that enabled a multinational peacekeeping force, as they called it, to go into Saudi Arabia to protect the rights of smaller nations and ensure the survival of democracy. When that happened, I thought back to what happened only a year before, when 7,000 people were bombed to death in Panama by American troops.

I remembered also the decision of the International Court of Human Rights at The Hague, which found unaminously and specifically against the United States because of its aggression against Nicaragua. I thought also about the people I had met in Central America who were maimed as a result of United States arms being poured into the region to kill people. I thought also about the United Nations resolutions that had been carried on Namibia, Palestine, Cyprus and many other issues that could not be implemented because of power of veto of the United States, or of any other member of the Security Council.

In the post-cold-war world in which we now live, is the fate of the world to be decided by the dollar power of the United States and by the industrial nations getting together to teach the rest of the world a lesson, or are we serious about searching for lasting solutions to apparently intractable conflicts? I believe strongly in the cause of peace. I believe that peace is possible in the middle east. We live in a world that is bitterly divided between north and south, between rich and poor nations, between the rich and poor within rich nations and between the rich and poor within poor nations. We live in a world where, increasingly, the poor are subsiding the rich. I do not like that. I want a world order that brings about peace.

Those who say that the only solution to the middle east and Gulf conflicts is to let slip the dogs of war on 15 January may be pleased to see United States, British, French and other troops go in and succeed in moving the borders and regaining Kuwait, even though 500,000 people may die in the process. Land will be laid waste for decades, if not permanently. However, when the fighing has stopped, the Palestinian and Kurdish problems will still be there, the lack of democracy in Kuwait, the lack of human rights in Iraq and the lack of democracy and respect for human rights in Saudi Arabia will still be there and the oppression of peoples throughout the region will still be there. The only way to achieve a genuine and lasting peace is to put on one side the colonial mentality and to start talking about the rights and self-respect of the peoples in that region.

I hope that there is no war on 15 January, or at any time. Instead of relaxing and doing nothing until we return here on 15 January, I hope that all those who are responsible for getting the troops to the area and building up war fever will, if necessary, go to Iraq, or anywhere else, so that talks can take place with the object of achieving peace in the region instead of the horrors of a chemical-nuclear war, with all its accompanying death and destruction. There is time, but not much.

7.47 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): It is almost impossible to respond to a debate that has been as wide-ranging as this. Hon. Members will understand if I am unable to reply to all the speeches. Some hon. Members who have left the Chamber said that they would have to do so.

The first speech was made by my neighbour, the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). It has become a tradition that he should open Adjournment motion debates and I should make the penultimate speech. He referred to the depths of the recession. His speech will be worth reading tomorrow in *Hansard*. Some hon. Members referred to constituency issues; others dealt with foreign affairs; and others concentrated on social issues which at this time of the year are perhaps the most relevant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) made a powerful constituency speech. He said that Newport ought to be awarded city status. His speech will also be worth reading. I hope, as he does, that the Home Secretary will read it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) dealt with foreign affairs. My hon. Friends the Members for Walsall, North (Winnick) and for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) made powerful speeches about international issues. I was especially moved by the description of conditions in Sri Lanka. If we are unable to spare a thought for such issues at this time of the year, when shall we?

Most hon. Members' speeches concentrated on social issues. The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) referred to hospitals; the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) referred to the elderly; the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) referred to the homeless. My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) made a powerful contribution on behalf of the disabled. In his wide-ranging speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North also referred to the homeless. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) concentrated on the rules governing adoption and its associated problems,

especially those encountered if one wants to adopt mentally handicapped children. They are all relevant social issues.

I intend to deal with three completely different Christmas-new year issues, and I shall do so in ascending order of importance. We have had a momentous couple of months in politics, and we now have a new Prime Minister. Getting rid of the old Prime Minister was the culmination of the Labour party's objectives of the past 11 years. I am delighted to be able to speak on behalf of a clear majority in the House, because 226 Labour Members, the 168 Tories who did not support her and the various other parties are all glad to see the back of her.

The one memorable statement of the new Prime Minister was his commitment to a classless society. That commitment will be tested over the Christmas recess. There is already a bad omen, because one of the characteristics of the Christmas recess is the publication of the new year's honours list. In his commitment to a classless society, he made the bizarre decision of recommending the creation of a hereditary baronetcy——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recollect the ruling that Mr. Speaker gave yesterday: generalities, yes, but it is not in order to discuss individual cases.

Mr. Grocott: The ruling gets more puzzling all the time. I thought that it was on questioning the Prime Minister specifically about that matter.

I was present at Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday. I hope that we do not return to the nonsense of hereditary titles, which would be ridiculous in the 20th century, let alone when a commitment has been made to a classless society. I hope that we bring the procedures of the House up to date so that we can question how titles are created, and I further hope that that matter is referred to the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Winnick: I am on it.

Mr. Grocott: I am glad that my hon. Friend is on it.

It is ridiculous that we are unable to question this important part of prime ministerial patronage. That is not a criticism of the monarch, who simply does what is recommended. It is high time that the honours system was subject to more careful scrutiny, particularly as it was abused for political purposes by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher).

I said that I would deal with issues in ascending order of importance. Baronetcies are not matters of major importance, but the other two subjects that I wish to raise are. We shall undoubtedly encounter bad weather during the Christmas recess. As bad weather dramatically affected the west midlands the weekend before last, I wish to refer to how the public services had to respond. Thousands of people, including many of my constituents, were without heat, power and water. My constituents in Dawley were without water for five days.

As ever, the people who find themselves at the sharp end when things go wrong are those who must go up poles and repair the wires in biting winds. They are employed by the great national utilities, but they did not make the investment decisions that caused the problems in the first place. It is salutary to note how, under this Government, our great national utilities have suffered from a lack of investment.

It is even more disgraceful that they have been sold off at knock down prices. *[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members do not like this; I would be upset if I were them. In the past week, the electricity industry was sold off at a cut price. According to a parliamentary answer, the Government received £5,182 million from the regional electricity companies, whereas the current value is £6,221 million. That is nothing compared to some of the huge privatisation bonuses under the Government. The National Freight Consortium was sold in 1982 at a benefit to the Exchequer of £5 million, whereas it is now worth £702 million. Associated British Ports was sold for £45 million, whereas it is now valued at £377 million. The Exchequer has received massive income from privatisation, but my constituents can see no benefit.

Since the Government took office, revenue from privatisation amounts to £28·5 billion. Therefore, would not one expect massive improvements in our national corporations? My word, there has been no improvement; but nor has there been any benefit from the revenue of North sea oil.

Mr. Jacques Arnold *rose*——

Mr. Grocott: I shall not give way; I have only three minutes left.

I tabled a simple question to the Chancellor on 14 December asking him to compare North sea oil revenue under this Government with that under the previous Labour Government. The previous Labour Government received £944 million from North sea oil, but this Government have had £70,200 million. Conservative Members wonder why their Government have survived. They have survived on a raft of North sea oil.

In the three minutes left to me, I wish to mention homelessness; I can see that Conservative Members are upset about that. Perhaps they will turn their attention to it and feel a little shame about what the Government have done for homeless people. We read in the press this morning of the Government's minor attempts to deal with homelessness in London. Ironically, on the same day, the Government announced the housing investment programme for my local authority, the Wrekin, for this year. Last year, we were allowed to borrow £3·3 million, but this year it has been reduced to £3 million. In cash terms, that is reduction of 10 per cent., but in real terms a reduction of 18 per cent.

It is hypocritical for the Government to pretend that they are doing something about homelessness when all the time they are reducing the number of houses being built. It is baffling that the Government, who pride themselves on being able to do simple arithmetic, hold up their hands in horror about the number of people without homes and the number on housing waiting lists, because they know that 500,000 fewer houses were built in the 1980s than in any decade since the war. No wonder the number of homeless people has increased, and no wonder there have been dramatic increases in local authority housing waiting lists.

Let me leave Conservative Members—sometimes they need things to be put in straightforward language—with a simple truth. If the demand for homes is increasing but the Government are reducing the supply, homelessness will result. If there is anything wrong with that logic, I should be delighted if a Conservative Member were to correct it at a later date.

[Mr. Grocott]

There is something particularly ironic in dealing with homelessness at Christmas. It was perhaps understandable that in Palestine in the first century there were problems of homelessness, but it is disgraceful that in the United Kingdom in the 20th century such problems remain. I look forward to a Labour Government solving homelessness, and let us hope that this is the last Christmas recess under the Tories.

7.58 pm

The Leader of the House and Lord President of the Council (Mr. John MacGregor): It was appropriate that my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) should open the debate because, as a distinguished predecessor of mine, he was much involved in closing such debates in the past. Having read his responses to those debates I must admit that I shall not replicate his delightful manner and turn of phrase, not least because of the limited amount of time available.

My right hon. Friend spoke about the economy, which was also appropriate as we are both former Chief Secretaries. He will be aware that there are two views about membership of the ERM and the rate at which we entered. I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) made an appropriate point about some of the benefits of ERM to British industry and commerce and I share his view.

My right hon. Friend's views are well known as he has a longstanding commitment to free floating exchange rates, but that is not the view of Her Majesty's Government nor of most hon. Members. The majority of hon. Members on both sides of the House approved of our entry. Although it was not quite clear in my right hon. Friend's remarks, he will recognise that those of us in favour of membership never regarded it as a panacea or as a painless solution to the need for a strong policy stance against inflation. The ERM is an anti-inflationary club and we are determined to abide by the rules.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made clear in last week's debate, we have no intention of putting our position in the ERM at risk. The Chancellor's remarks in the debate were carefully considered and, since they were briefly quoted by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North, it is right to requote in full the particular passage. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor said:

"There can be no question of a reduction in interest rates that is not fully justified by our position in the ERM. That will be the case however strong is the pressure for lower interest rates based on other indicators. The discipline of the ERM is tough, but, because it increases the certainty of lower inflation, it also means that when interest rate reductions do take place, they are securely based."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 966.]

My right hon. Friend's last point is of particular importance.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North also referred to a comment from the governor of the Bundesbank. We take domestic economic conditions into account when considering economic decisions, as do all other countries in the ERM. The governor of the Bundesbank was not saying anything new or different in that context. The ERM provides an over-arching, additional discipline to reinforce anti-inflationary policy. That is one reason why we joined and why we shall stick with it. My right hon. Friend suggested that the exchange rate is too high. It is most important to maintain the necessary monetary and fiscal conditions until we can get the inflationary elements out of the economy.

The real danger still ahead of us is that high wage and salary increases run the risk of eroding the gains in productivity and unit costs achieved in the past decade. Those increases will undermine our competitiveness because of high labour costs and will keep our inflation rate at too high a level. As our first priority it is right to aim for a sustained fall in the rate of inflation.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) referred to a number of matters relating to the disabled. All those matters have been frequently referred to in the House in the past and I shall deal with them briefly, not least because the right hon. Gentleman also informed me that he had to leave before the conclusion of the debate. On the independent living fund, the right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the trust deed runs out some months after the introduction of community care arrangements in 1993. The Government would therefore expect that people seeking help after the implementation of those arrangements should be able to look to the local authorities. We shall consult the local authorities on the timetable for any transfer of existing cases and associated resources.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to service men and the Crown Proceedings Act 1947. That matter was carefully considered by the House at the time of the repeal of section 10 of the 1947 Act. It was concluded that it was not possible to define a scheme that allowed retrospection without creating further injustices or anomalies. I strongly believe that we should not pass retrospective legislation. The right hon. Gentleman will also be aware of our position on nuclear test veterans as he and I have had exchanges on that before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) requested a change in his county's structure plan. I have been sufficiently involved with all the details of redrawing my structure plan, including questions about mineral extraction, to know that it would be unwise of me to comment on my hon. Friend's structure plan given that I am not Secretary of State for the Environment. My hon. Friend's comments had a familiar ring and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will read them. However, I note that my hon. Friend has already been active in making representations on the various issues that he raised.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) raised the question of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs. If I am allowed to get away for the recess—I share the view of the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) that we shall not spend our entire time on holiday and that we shall do a good deal of work as well—I shall spend part of it considering the history and the arguments that the hon. Gentleman made. He will be aware that the second report of the Select Committee on Procedure on the workings of the Select Committee System concluded in recommendation 51:

"We therefore accept that this would not be a sensible moment to recommend the establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs."

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) speaks with great knowledge about the racing and bloodstock industry because of his

constituency and the great interest he takes in it. I agree with him that it is an important industry because of its contribution to the economy, the jobs that it provides and the pleasure it gives. My hon. Friend's point about VAT and the industry is obviously one for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury and I shall ensure that it is drawn to their attention, as it has been before.

My hon. Friend also spoke about the horse as an agricultural animal. I recall the representations that I received about that when I was Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, not least from my constituents in Norfolk—my hon. Friend referred to a number of hon. Members who represent Norfolk. I considered the case with some care, but one of the problems is that the horse is not always an agricultural animal.

The hon. Member for Newport, East referred to the number of years he has been here, but the tribute he paid to his constituency was so long that I thought that he was making a maiden speech rather than one after 25 years in the House. Perhaps he was rehearsing his reselection speech in time for the next election. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the grant of city status is an honour conferred by the sovereign by letters patent. It is not a right that can be obtained by a town fulfilling certain conditions, irrespective of the points made in favour of Newport. That honour is awarded rarely and, since the war, only three towns have been granted city status—Derby, Southampton and Swansea. Any application must be considered against the background that I have outlined and I can give no suggestions as to the outcome of an application.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) gave me a let-out for not referring to funding for the National Health Service and related matters because of the debate about it that will be held shortly—I was not anxious to have such a let-out. Time prevents me from discussing the matters in detail, but all the issues raised in relation to the National Health Service, social security, cold weather payments and the position of the disabled have been met by the substantial increases in funding—between 50 per cent. and a doubling in funding in real terms—during the Government's term of office. We have increased that funding because we regard those areas as high priorities for public expenditure and because of the successful growth of the economy. Unfortunately, I cannot elaborate on that because of the time left.

My hon. Friend also spoke about the Select Committee on Health and referred to the insular and self-centred approach of the Scottish Liberal Democrats and in so doing he quoted Robbie Burns. That reminded me of another of his quotes:

"O wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as others see us!"

I share my hon. Friend's attitude to the Liberal Democrats' behaviour. The Government deplore any attempt to prevent the formation of Committees on grounds unrelated to their merits. If it continues to prove impossible to set up Committees and the Chairman of the Committee of Selection seeks time for a debate on the particular Select Committee to which my hon. Friend referred, I shall be happy to provide it at the earliest opportunity. It will be for the Chairman of the Committee to take the initiating step, but I should certainly look for an opportunity to debate the matter at the earliest moment.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) spoke about the homeless, and we all understand the many arguments he made. He will also recognise that a great deal of action and much expenditure has been undertaken by the Government. In view of the time I cannot say much in response except to highlight the statement that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning made yesterday which will extend the special and substantial programme by providing hostel and move-on accommodation worth £96 million.

The hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) raised a particular constituency case that I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I should like to outline in more detail what is being done for pensioners, but time prevents me.

I do not often agree with the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), but I am glad that he raised the Amnesty International report, because it draws our attention to a number of issues. It is another reason why the invasion of Kuwait is totally unacceptable and why, therefore, the United Nations resolution must be adhered to.

My hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter) raised a number of issues about sea defences with which, as he knows, I am familiar. When I was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I attached great priority to increasing the Government's contribution to sea defences. My hon. Friend recognised that increased contribution. I opened one major new sea defence during that period on the north Norfolk coast. The environmental argument, to which my hon. Friend referred, was accepted by the Government for the first time in the case of Aldeburgh when I was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I was happy to carry it through. My right hon. Friend the present Minister has continued to support that priority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) raised a constituency point about the revenue support grant, which I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. French) made several points about road safety. He will have several other opportunities to draw the attention of the House to those points. He will be aware of the strong focus on road safety matters in the legislative programme for this Parliament. As he will have other opportunities, I hope that he will agree that the House can now adjourn for the Christmas recess.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House at its rising on Thursday 20th December do adjourn until Monday 14th January.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54(1) (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Hospital Funding

8.10 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): There is no better time for us to consider some of the exciting events which are now taking place than at Christmas because one of the joys of Christmas is the many myths which are perpetuated at this time. We have our pantos and our theatres. We tell more fairy stories and have more excitement every day. We can almost inevitably expect a little panto from Her Majesty's Government. It usually has about as much relation to reality as Jack and the Beanstalk. They usually tell us how extremely lucky we are to have a national health service funded to a greater and greater degree by a benificent, kind, committed and caring Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am glad that the chorus is suitably rehearsed, if not very numerous or genuine.

Yesterday we had a couple of examples of the Government's pantomime. The Minister of State, Department of Health—I hope that I am not promoting or demoting him——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The hon. Lady is promoting me.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am promoting the Minister, but it is almost always more tactful to promote people than to mention their correct station in life. We had a statement from the Department yesterday which purported to be about the commitment of new funds to the NHS.

It will not hurt for a few minutes to consider the problem of what is happening in the NHS, not least because it affects every citizen in this country. There have been several major reforms of the health service since 1947, all of them major and carried out by Conservative Governments. They were usually exceedingly ill-thought-out and badly based and they produced some bizarre results. Yet every time that we have a Conservative Government we are told that what is really needed is a means of making the entire service more efficient and to obtain better value for money and better results. Indeed, the previous Prime Minister became famous for saying that the national health service was safe in the hands of the Conservative party. However, the reality of the Government's management of the health service is announcements such as we had yesterday.

The opportunity of Health Question Time in the House was not taken yesterday to announce the new sums of money which were supposedly to be committed to the NHS. Although various written questions in Volume 183 of *Hansard* for Tuesday 18 December were relevant to the subject, a full statement of what the Department issued as a press notice was not given. For that information, one had to go elsewhere. One soon begins to realise that the Government are in considerable difficulty.

One of the Government's hobby horses is that one obtains better value from health care only when people appreciate its cost—not its value, only its cost. To that end we are told that the establishment of what is called an internal market is necessary. That appears to consist of bringing in large numbers of accountants with no medical training to assess the cost of various services within the NHS. Suffice it to say that that has not been one of the most successful ideas that the Conservative Government have pushed forward, not least because the reforms were put in train without any research into either their efficiency or the way in which they will operate when they are introduced next April.

On top of that reform, a new set of hospital organisations—the so-called opted-out independent trusts —has been created. We were told that, of course, the Government would not consider "political" objections to such trusts; they were interested only in facts. The reality of discussing opt-out applications has been that the Government have not discussed the facts at any point. The facts and finance have not been revealed to the national health service. Those of us who subjected the business plans for our areas to close examination were not given any sensible answers to any of the questions that we put to the Department of Health.

The assumptions in the business plan for Crewe are not only wholly unrealistic but unrealisable. Even the population figures on which much of the planning is based cannot be confirmed by any independent source. In the business plan they are described as the result of informal discussion with the chief executive of the local authority. No Government Department would be prepared to produce and bring before the House of Commons a plan based on an informal assessment of population growth.

Coopers and Lybrand, along with other highly expensive firms of accountants, produced several assessments of the so-called business plans. The information in those assessments has not been forthcoming. No hon. Member has been given the opportunity of seeing the assessments of the reality of the figures.

Yesterday we were told that suddenly, halfway through the financial year, the Government had decided to give a lot of new money to the national health service because they were anxious that the people who move to the new system in April should not suggest that they had a shortfall in their budget. Why has the shortfall amounted to £40·5 million in the underlying deficit? Why have the Government decided that that figure is not acceptable? Is it because the number of bed closures, which happen not only week by week but day by day throughout the health service, have given rise to considerable anxiety among Conservative Members? Almost every day the newspapers carry an account of a delegation from a frantic Conservative Member in a marginal seat and his constituents going cap in hand to the Secretary of State for Health. The hon. Member demands that his—inevitably it is his, not her—hospitals should be protected and that other hospitals should be required to become more efficient by being shut down.

Lest we are in any doubt about that, we can examine the average daily available beds in England. The Government do not publish bed closure statistics; we can assess the net changes only on the average number of available beds during the year. An examination of those figures for the years 1979 to 1989-90 reveals some interesting facts. In 1979, there were 149,000 acute beds and 362,000 beds in total. In 1983, there were 142,000 acute sector beds and 343,000 beds in total—a drop on the previous year's figures of 2,000 in the acute sector and 5,000 in the total. In 1985, there were 136,000 beds in the acute sector and 325,000 in total—a drop of 3,000 and 8,000 respectively. In 1989-90, there were 121,000 beds in the acute sector and 270,000 in total. Between 1979 and 1989-90, we have lost 28,000 beds in the acute sector and 92,000 beds in total.

That means that we have lost 18·8 per cent. of the beds in the acute sector and 25·4 per cent.—one quarter—of the total number of beds.

We are told, "Do not worry. We are always looking for new beds, new hospitals, new input and new investment, all of which will produce a much higher level of patient care." In reality, the intention behind opt-out hospitals is that the market will achieve for the Government what they have not the guts to do while they have to fight elections. They hope that, as soon as a charging procedure is in place and as soon as the district health authorities have to bargain with each other for payment for different sectors, they will find it difficult to balance their books and more and more of them will close more and more beds.

An assessment by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts of the finance available for the NHS shows a shortfall in NHS funding since 1980-81 of £806 million. There is no suggestion that yesterday's announcement of RHA allocations, which we are told represent a real increase of 5 per cent. in hospital and community health service revenue spending, will give any benefit to the NHS. To start with, the announcement does not take into account the fact that, as the Minister knows, NHS inflation is very much higher than the normal inflation rate. We must have 1 per cent. real growth for an increasingly elderly population, a further 1 per cent. for new health initiatives. The remaining 3 per cent. is likely to be eaten up by the difference in NHS inflation and inflation in the economy as a whole. The National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts has suggested that that figure is likely to be 8·5 to 9 per cent., which can be contrasted with the 6 per cent. against which the Government calculate their real terms figures.

Let us talk about facts, not fantasy. How is it that the annual shortfall on target funding for the hospital and community health services, in terms of actual spending, cash allocations, inflation, cost improvement programmes —including the amounts that the Government have put in for what they call "funding for improvements in salaries and wages", although they are careful never to give the right amounts—was £17 million in 1981-82, £55 million in 1982-83, £283 million in 1983-84 and so on? The final target is £806 million.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: (Harrow, West): Did the hon. Lady use the same logic when she and her hon. Friends forced through the House a 16 per cent. cut in real terms in capital spending?

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman parrots the usual central office handout. He does not seem to have understood the position. People know that, waiting lists are getting longer and longer. Conservative Members know that hospital beds in their constituencies are closing at a faster rate this year than they have closed for many years. They know that when the electors register their vote in the next general election they will be only too aware of the realities of NHS funding. That is why they are leaping up and down demanding that their constituencies are protected, but that will not in any way cozen their constituents. They will know that, far from committing new moneys, and far from producing improvements in health care, the Government are seeking to cushion their plans between now and next year because that will give them an opportunity to call a general election. If they genuinely believed that their plans for the NHS would produce much better care, they would not have railroaded through the House the damaging changes that have produced independent opted-out trusts.

Mr. Dorrell: The subject of the debate is NHS funding. Will the hon. Lady soon explain to the House why she thinks that, under this Government, total NHS funding has risen by 3 per cent. per annum for nearly 12 years while it rose by 1·5 per cent. in real terms during the Labour Government's term of office?

Mrs. Dunwoody: Certainly. I shall have no difficulty in doing that because, unlike the Minister, I have spent a great deal of my time dealing with the NHS.

There is one thing that the Government have not been able to do during the past 10 years: they have not been able to control NHS spending in the GP sector. That is why they have pushed through changes in the GP contract. The Minister knows perfectly well that, although the Government have set out to cut funding in the hospital and acute sectors and to transfer much of the work on to community care without offering funding, they have not been able to control the amount of money that GPs spent.

Mr. Dorrell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am happy to give way, although I thought that the Minister would make his own speech.

Mr. Dorrell: I shall not make a habit of intervening, but, as the subject that the hon. Lady suggested for debate was NHS funding, it seems sensible that I should allow her to answer some of the points that I may make before I make them. She will be able to retaliate in advance.

The hon. Lady correctly alluded to the substantial growth in spending on primary health care under this Government and suggested that that was not an appropriate use of public money. Perhaps she will explain to the House which aspects of expenditure on primary health care she would like to be cut.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My goodness, it is not difficult to see that we are approaching a general election. If I want to say something in the House, I am perfectly capable of using my own words. I merely said that the Government could not control expenditure on primary health care. I did not say that the expansion of primary health care was not a good thing; I said that the Government had sought to pretend that they were committing new moneys when they were not. They are rearranging the figures that they gave in the autumn statement to make a general presentation to the public. The Minister said that he thought that it would be a good idea if many health authorities had public relations spokesmen.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Dunwoody: The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak. In any case, I thought that this was a serious debate.

The Minister said that he thought that it would be a good idea to appoint some public relations spokesmen. That is presumably because many health authorities are not capable of presenting the figures in the bizarre way in which he has presented them.

When the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said that a serious situation was developing and spoke of

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

the difficulties of a particular hospital in making ends meet before the new regime came in, the Secretary of State said:

"It is understood that some of the London districts will not have to remove their deficits before the beginning of the new system. However, it would be a bad managerial signal to allow those that have overspent their budgets again to pre-empt resources that should be available to the whole of the health service".—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1990; Vol. 183, c. 148.]

That was at a time when his own Department was announcing that it was deliberately going to attempt to cushion the deficit in order to gain what it saw as a short-term political advantage.

A written answer on 18 December gives a clear view of the number of regional health authorities that will be in deficit. It says that the numbers have

"fallen from 122 in 1989-90 to an end-of-September estimate of 51 in 1990-91."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1990; Vol. 183, c. *156*.]

The reason for that is that many of those hospitals have been not only cutting services but reducing the number of beds and are increasingly faced with the prospect of having to shut down even more services in the new year. It is not a matter of them simply being able to deal with a budgetary deficit; they know that they will have to remove from the general public services that are most desperately needed.

The list of districts in deficit shows that almost every region has a district that is at least £1·2 million in deficit. Many of those in the London district, which includes the teaching hospitals, are more than £1·7 million in deficit. In West Lambeth, the deficit is £3·1 million and in Camberwell it is £2·3 million. The reality is that the Government suddenly discover just before Christmas that, in the three months immediately after the House reassembles, there will be an accelerating programme of bed reductions and pressure on services that will make it impossible for them to disguise from the electorate what is actually happening as opposed to what they say is happening. Their response was to seek some way of immediately putting a large plaster on top of the haemorrhage.

A business plan was prepared for Leighton hospital, a district general hospital. Many of its assumptions were wrong and the people referred to throughout the document as the agents—I know them as general practitioners—made it clear in the detailed questionnaire that I submitted to them, copies of which have been deposited with the Secretary of State, that they had no intention of changing their referral patterns and saw no future possibility of dealing with any extra patients in that hospital. They asked, if there were to be a means of attracting new patients to the hospital, what would happen to the existing waiting lists, which were lengthening again after considerable difficulties in the past.

The Department of Health has answered none of their questions. Having told me that it would look at the logic, the figures and the business plan, the Department simply issued a straightforward statement saying that the hospital should be allowed to opt out. It never answered the questions or responded to any of the doctors' worries, and there was no consultation procedure to take into account the wishes of my constituents or the health service professionals. They were of no interest to the Government because, fundamentally, they do not believe in the provision of free care at the point of use. Their interest is quite different—to set up an extremely complex, unworkable and expensive form of financing which, with any luck, if there is any difficulty with moneys, will result in a lowering of health care standards throughout my constituency. That has been the purpose and clear intent of the reorganisation, which is why the Department of Health has suddenly realised the implications of its actions.

The Department does not want to enter the spring with the NHS facing even more closures and pressures, and with constituents suddenly becoming aware of the real intent of the Government's health policy. The Minister does not want to talk about that and would much rather trot out figures which have no relationship to what we have been talking about. However, the reality of health care under the Conservatives is that it is a declining force and will continue to be so, irrespective of the Will Hay form of mathematics that seems to be practised in Whitehall.

However, for those people who need health care—the young, the old, and the increasing number of men and women in my district who suffer from major coronary problems and need better care—the future is bleak. We can only hope that the next general election will fundamentally change the future for health care in this country.

8.35 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): The speech of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) was an easy speech for a Labour Member to make. A friend of mine in the Labour party explained to me why Labour members speak in such terms. He said that it did not matter what the Labour party did in the NHS—he admitted that Labour had a pretty awful record when in government—because everyone believed that the Labour party cared about the health service. He said that, conversely, it did not matter what a Conservative Government did to the health service, because no one would believe them.

Therefore, it was possible for the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich to make a speech giving the problems—some of them real—and gaps in the health service. It was easy for her to say that some people who need treatment cannot receive it when they want it, and use that as an argument to pretend—that is all she is doing—that the national health service is being reduced in size and having funds taken away from it by the Government. To be fair to the hon. Lady, she knows that her argument is a pretence, and she is simply making it for narrow political reasons.

The reality is that, if the Labour party had this Government's record in the NHS, it would be crowing about it. If a Labour Government had managed to spend more on the health service than they did on defence, they would say that that was fantastic and showed their commitment to the health service. Year after year, the hon. Lady voted for a health service budget smaller than the defence budget, but she shows no shame about that.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: I share my hon. Friend's desire not to let this debate descend into a party-political wrangle. In his important intervention during the speech of the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) he spoke about the incontrovertible fact that

the last Labour Government cut expenditure on the National Health Service, whereas this Government have massively increased it. During his speech, will he press the Opposition spokesmen and women to give an absolute commitment that, in the unlikely event that the Labour party is ever returned to power, it will not repeat its previous appalling record on health?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I served on a community health council during the last few years of the last Labour Government, and I remember the enormous problems caused in our health district by the antics of that Government. There were cuts in budgets—not in the hoped-for increases but in the actual budgets—and we had to close some of the private beds without any increase in Government funding.

Those private beds brought in about £500,000 a year, which was a lot of money to us in those days, and there was no replacement for that money. Labour Ministers ordered us to get rid of the private beds, but they did not replace the funding. Their record was shameful. The assurance that my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) asks for is important——

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Spending on the health service has had to increase for a number of reasons that have been forced on the Government—increased numbers of nurses and doctors, for example. The Government did not volunteer that. If their record is so good, why have 3,000 beds already been closed?

Mr. Hughes: I shall come to the point about beds because it is important, as is the number of people being treated in hospital. It is interesting to compare closed beds statistics in our health service with those for health services in other countries. A larger number of cases are being treated in this country.

The Opposition will not like it, but we should look at the facts about NHS activity. In the 10 years to 1988-89, the number of acute in-patients treated rose by 20 per cent. to 5 million; the number of acute day cases treated doubled to 1·1 million. Acute out-patient attendances rose by 6 per cent. to 30 million; geriatric in-patients treated rose by 9 per cent. to 450,000. The number of maternity in-patients rose by 17 per cent. Courses of dental treatment increased by 18 per cent. to almost 35 million. Of course there are more doctors and nurses—that is an important part of the health service. They did not come from nowhere; they came as a matter of policy. It has been the policy of this Government to spend more and to pay the doctors and nurses better. I hope that the Opposition welcome that.

The number of GPs rose by 20 per cent. to almost 20,000, and the number of dentists by 25 per cent. to 15,000. The number of hospital doctors rose by 12 per cent. to 44,000, and the number of nurses and midwives by 3 per cent. to 400,000.

I am proud of this record, as the Labour party would have been proud of it had it been able to achieve it. It is certain, however, that the Labour party would not have spent as much on the national health service in the past 11 years, because we have proof for at least the first three of those years. Spending plans left by the last Labour Government show that, in those three years, they would have spent less than the Conservative Government on the health service. We want no nonsense from the Labour party about this.

Of course there are gaps, as those of us who invariably use the NHS understand, but that is not an argument for pretending that the Government have tried to cut health services.

The Opposition have been schizophrenic about management in the health service. I have heard the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) speak in the House about the need for new management techniques in the health service. I have heard her arguing for money following patients. I have even heard her argue—although the words could not cross her lips in exactly this form—for a sort of internal market in the health service. To give it credit, the Labour party understands that we need reforms in the hospital services, but Opposition Members have voted against every reform that we have tried to introduce.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I should like to put the record straight. The hon. Gentleman is engaging in a shameful trick when trying to imply that we are somehow in favour of the internal market. I shall make it absolutely clear to him, as I have done every time I have spoken and as my hon. Friend the Member Livingston (Mr. Cook), the shadow Secretary of State, has too, that we are against the internal market. When we come to government we shall abolish it, for two principal reasons. We have consistently argued that there will be competition on costs, and when costs are cut, corners are cut and lives will be lost. Our object is not to squeeze resources out of the health service —one of the intentions of the internal market. We think it necessary to invest more resources in the health service.

It is not a question of money following the patient: the internal market will mean the patient following the contract. We are against the internal market because we are in favour of patients choosing where they are treated —a choice that they can exercise in discussion with their GPs. Under the internal market they would have to go where the district health authority manager had decided to place the cheapest contract. So I should be grateful for a little integrity in the debate.

Mr. Hughes: That would indeed be useful. The hon. Lady and her colleagues have spent so long shamefully parodying our reforms that they have probably started to believe the parody. They recognise that there are serious problems in the way in which hospitals are managed. Of course some health authorities run out of money; that is inevitable in our system. However much money is provided, it is inevitable, given that authorities must budget for a whole year on the basis of how many patients they may or may not treat, that the money will run out at some stage—sometimes for good reasons and sometimes because of bad planning.

When the hon. Member for Peckham tries to deal with this problem, she knows that she will have to go in the same direction as we have gone. Even if the Opposition had the chance, they would not abandon these reforms, because they know that that would cut patient care.

The Labour party has been dishonest about our performance and reforms, and has also sought to undermine some of the other changes. First, the Opposition complained about the new slimline health boards, which are extremely valuable. The problem with some of the old health authorities and family practitioner committees was that they were more like group therapy sessions than real meetings. I went to meetings of both kinds and found the quality of decision making poor. I do

[Mr. Hughes]

not believe that local councillors serving on health boards make them representative of anything, except in so far as those councillors claim to make health authorities representative. We want the best management available. Resources would be finite, as a Labour Government would also find. Given finite resources, they must be properly managed, and the best value for money must be obtained for the patient.

Several health authorities have used capital money—taxpayers' money meant to be used for health care and the building of new health service resources—to build laundries. Those laundries are run at a loss. They seek to compete with the private sector and undercut it, but they cannot possibly truly undercut it. So I accuse some health authorities of wasting capital money on building these laundries and using revenue money to support them, while their accounts show a profit on using their own resources, which cannot be true. Information given to the Department proves that these authorities are wasting a great deal of money.

Mr. Allen McKay: Where have these laundries been built? Most hospitals are designed with internal laundries.

Mr. Hughes: With the greatest respect, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. I have a fair amount of information about this——

Mr. McKay: Where?

Mr. Hughes: I believe there is one in Dyfed——

Mr. McKay: Only one, then.

Mr. Hughes: It is one of many examples. The hon. Gentleman's attitude is ridiculous, but that is not unusual. If he goes to the Library and looks at the questions and answers on this topic he will find that he is absolutely wrong. After that, perhaps he will apologise, but I doubt it.

That laundry cost £4·3 million of public money to build. It is undercutting private local laundries, but the prices that it charges for outside work must mean that the laundry is operating at a loss. That is shameful, and results in money being taken from real patient care.

Health authorities are hanging on to land that they are not using for health care purposes. My health authority in Harrow has had a piece of such land for at least 20 years. It was bought for all sorts of good reasons, but the authority found that it could not get planning permission because it was green belt and Crown land. Instead of disposing of the site and using the money for health care, the council is hanging on to it. I do not think that it will ever be possible to build on that land. That is a shameful waste.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Has the hon. Gentleman not noticed that property prices, even in the absolute nirvana of Harrow, are falling rather than rising?

Mr. Hughes: There might have been an occasional opportunity to sell the land at some time in the past 20 years when land prices were not falling. This might not be the right time to sell the land, but the authority has been hanging on to it for a long time. I hope that the hon. Lady does not disagree with the principle of my point.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The health service is developing and improving and will need new sites. No one could seriously tell an inner London health authority—perhaps I should not call it that, because the name may be rather posher—or a health authority in any conurbation to get rid of land that could be used to provide better facilities for the mentally handicapped, for children or for other highly developed services. Such a suggestion is highly irresponsible and boringly commercial in the narrowest and most unimaginative sense.

Mr. Hughes: I am sure that the mentally handicapped in Harrow will be grateful to know that the empty land at Clamp hill is providing good service for them. I can assure the hon. Lady that it is not. The money realised from the sale of that land could be put to good use. By her intervention, the hon. Lady reveals her empty posturing about the health service. It is nonsense to say that an empty piece of land in Harrow helps the mentally handicapped, and the hon. Lady knows it.

In a muddled and confused part of her speech, the hon. Lady talked about GP spending and seemed to suggest that we should cut spending in that area. When she reads her speech in *Hansard* she will see why she gave that impression.

Ms. Harman: Rubbish.

Mr. Hughes: I do not think that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was in the Chamber at that point in her hon. Friend's speech.

Ms. Harman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was in the Chamber from the time that my hon. Friend started to speak.

Mr. Hughes: I apologise to the hon. Lady. It is a pity that she was not listening to her hon. Friend's speech.

Nobody who looks at the general practitioner service in any part of the country could say that there has not been a massive increase in funding. There are new GP surgeries with marvellous facilities and many more GPs, and fewer patients are being treated by each general practitioner. Those are the marks of what the Government have done, because they have improved services enormously.

GPs are providing many services that were not provided before. The GP contract has meant that even reluctant general practitioners are now providing services that they would never have thought of providing before. As a result of that contract, the rates of immunisation are impressive. The Labour party opposed that policy point by point, and said that immunisation rates would go down. That shows that Labour is interested only in playing politics, and does not want to look at the facts. The health service has been safe in the hands of the Government and it will continue to be.

8.54 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): It is a great pleasure to speak on this non-partisan occasion, when the true spirit of Christmas pervades the House. I should like to speak about some of the health issues affecting the people of Wales, and I am sure that the Minister will deal adequately with my questions. First, I shall deal with elective or cold surgery in the three new regional centres in Wales. They are the centre at Bangor for cataract operations, the centre for hernia operations at Bridgend and the centre for hip replacement operations at Rhydlafar in Cardiff.

What is the success rate of those three regional centres in terms of the way in which health authorities outside those areas send patients to them? A GP may wish to refer a patient from my constituency to Bangor in north Wales. That is a good five-hour drive, because Wales does not yet have a north-south link. Some people argue that that is not a bad thing, but I take the contrary view.

As a consequence of sending patients that distance, the health authority may not have enough patients in its teaching hospital to train new doctors. Have the three regional centres been a success, or does elective surgery give rise to problems of family support and so on when the hospital is some distance away? If an operation goes wrong and the patient is a long way from home, the familial community system that we have retained in Wales is not available to support him.

My second topic is drug prescribing. Will the Minister identify the problems and name the drugs that are involved? Where do the problems exist, and what is the relationship between hospital consultants and GPs? I shall deal with one drug, but I should like the Minister to tell us the problems that have arisen with others.

The drug I wish to speak about is one used in the treatment of renal patients who are acutely anaemic and is called erythropoietin. I have some information about the limited experience of some consultants in Wales. Until recently, when the unit administrator in the hospital was unwilling to fund the use of this drug, a consultant could persuade a general practitioner to fund the prescription for him. Now, general practitioners are being told, partly because of possible cases of negligence against them and partly because they can be subject to disciplinary proceedings, not to do this unless they are monitoring the patient and are responsible for the administration of the drug.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is my hon. Friend aware that this is a problem throughout the country, as fewer and fewer renal units are able to give full courses of drugs? They give half the dosage and patients then have to travel, often long distances, to go back for the other half of the treatment.

Mr. Wardell: I am grateful for that helpful intervention. I am aware of some cases in Wales of people travelling long distances for treatment.

I should like the Minister to tell me how many drugs, like this one, have been prescribed over the past few years by general practitioners, which they can no longer prescribe. Is he confident that consultants will be able to continue to prescribe such drugs, to ensure that patients get the treatment they need?

Although I do not want to burden the Minister or his officials so close to Christmas, perhaps he could look at the use of another drug, alpha interferon, which is used for the treatment of leukaemia patients. The same problem arises with this drug in that in some parts of the country, under a similar relationship, when consultant haemotologists have had difficulty with the unit administrator, the general practitioners have been helpful in prescribing the drug. However, that has changed.

As we approach Christmas, I should like the Minister to tell us that we shall not have the kind of situation with which I was faced recently. A consultant in haemotology at the University hospital of Wales, Dr. Whittaker, told me that he was prevented from prescribing alpha interferon. The only way that the patient could have the drug was for a charity to pay for two months' treatment in the bone marrow transplant unit.

I am sure that the Minister will agree when I say that I should not like to see a spectre haunting us—that of large numbers of people, perhaps children, appealing on television, on local radio or in the newspapers and saying things such as, "Please, please where is the money for me to have the drug that I need to save my life?" Will that happen, or can we be confident that adequate money will be provided for the prescribing of such drugs? That concerns me, because I know of several similar cases.

My third point concerns the case of urgent open heart surgery in the University hospital of Wales. This is a regional centre, funded as a regional service by the Welsh Office. In the Welsh Office commentary published in March this year on public expenditure in Wales 1990-91 to 1992-93, in paragraph 429 on page 159, the Welsh Office says:

> "The cardiac services for adults in South Wales have been the subject of a review by members of the Cardiology Committee of the Royal College of Physicians. The review confirmed Welsh Office planning policies for cardiac services in pointing to the need for about 1,300 open heart operations per year".

Some 1,200 of these are for adults.

The Royal College of Physicians accepts that we need the facility in Wales for carrying out about 1,200 adult open-heart operations a year. The view of the college reiterates the view of the specialist cardio-thoracic team that reported in 1980. In 1984, the then Secretary of State for Wales, now Lord Crickhowell, accepted that there was a need for well over 1,100 open heart operations in Wales a year as a regional service. During the latest year for which figures are available, which is 1988-89, 591 such operations were performed at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff.

As Wales has one of the highest incidences of heart disease of any developed country in the world, I ask the Minister to tell the House when the 1,200 open heart operations that are needed to be carried out each year within the Principality will be carried out. I am sure that he will give enormous Christmas cheer to the people of Wales if he will give us a target date.

We in Wales are delighted that the Government are putting in place a new paediatric cardiology unit at the University hospital of Wales. In the spirit of Christmas cheer, we are pleased to hear that. It would be additionally beneficial for the people of Wales to know the target date for what the Royal College of Physicians, the previous Secretary of State for Wales and the cardio-thoracic team set as one of the needs of the Principality.

9.7 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): It is a great pleasure briefly to take part in the debate, especially as my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, who is to reply, is a near neighbour of mine in Nottinghamshire. From time to time, in his former incarnation, he used to advise me of the importance of certain debates, some of which took place on a Friday.

It is a great pleasure to be able to take up some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell). It is unusual to hear someone from the Opposition Benches, but no less welcome for that, paying tribute to the

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

Government's work in the national health service. I am sure that the entire House was pleased with the fair way in which he presented his arguments.

We are debating funding within the NHS, and I wish to take the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) gently to task. There is nothing between us when it comes to recognising the need for improving and enhancing the quality of the health service. In our postbags each week and each month, we read of instances where individuals are competing for resources within the service. They are competing for care. We share the frustrations of our constituents and we try to ensure that they receive the care that they deserve.

Those sentiments, which are shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House, are not the same as recognising that there are funding difficulties within the NHS. It would be impossible to fund it to the full extent that all of us wish were possible. It is a truism that the United Kingdom's entire gross domestic product could be spent on the health service without meeting demand. There has to be a sensible mechanism for dealing with funding to ensure that there is an increase year on year—I maintain that that has been made possible by the success of the Government's economic reforms during the 1980s—and that those funds are spent effectively.

Secondly, I gently chide the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich about the myth that Conservative Members do not use the health service. That is nonsense. Most of us use the national health service. We are children of the NHS, we were born in it, we venerate it and we revere the work that it does. We applaud the tremendously hard work of the NHS staff.

It is a myth that Tory Members have private care and do not use the National Health Service. I speak with some feeling, as I have just spent a few days in a hospital not far from here, where my wife was giving birth to our second child. She is a doctor in the National Health Service. It is wrong to suggest that Tory Members are divorced from reality and do not support the National Health Service. The hon. Member for Crewe should not dwell on that too long because it adds no weight to her agrument.

I wish to talk about resources, before coming to the Government's enviable record, which was so admirably outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). I am a great supporter of the Audit Commission. If I am successful in the ballot for an Adjournment debate, I shall choose as a subject the future direction of the Audit Commission and how its role can be enhanced and increased. It is important to recognise the valuable role that the Audit Commission has already played in the National Health Service, and the fact that it can continue to play, in ensuring that we achieve the best value for money.

The Audit Commission rightly receives the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. It has already done a great deal of valuable work in the National Health Service. I am thinking especially of its report on the care of the elderly. Of course, that was some time ago, but it has also produced many other reports that have been of great benefit to the health service. It is important that the Audit Commission has full access so that it can carry out a whole range of work and produce the necessary reports.

My hon. Friend the Minister may remember that, during the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill last year, there was initially some reluctance to accept an expanded role for the Audit Commission in the National Health Service. However, my hon. Friend and members of the Opposition Front-Bench team supported the amendment that I tabled, which is now enshrined in law. I hope that the Audit Commission will be given the scope to carry out in other areas the sort of work that it has done in the National Health Service. That is essential if we are to get the best possible value for money.

The area that I represent is covered by the Nottingham health authority, which has had an annual increase in funding of 8·6 per cent. over the past five years. That is a 13·1 per cent. real increase in resources over that period. In any debate on National Health Service funding, it is important to stress the very large increase in the funds that have been put into the National Health Service. I am especially proud that it has been possible to do that in the area that I represent. We have benefited greatly from the time that my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) was Secretary of State for Health. He, like me, has a close relationship with the local health authority.

We should pay tribute to the large increase in funding and the great benefit that has accrued to Nottingham. The City hospital is currently undergoing a multi-million pound expansion, to which my constituents look forward. The Queen's medical centre is arguably the best hospital in Europe. It is enormous, and sometimes we have difficulty finding our way around it. It is a great centre of excellence. We have benefited greatly from all that is being achieved in those two hospitals, as well as from the myriad other excellent health facilities in the city.

It is right to pay tribute to the work of David White, chairman of Nottingham health authority, and David Banks, general manager, day in and day out, on behalf of all those covered by that health authority. Only last Friday, I was at the City hospital visiting a hospice, Haywood house, where so much good and caring work is done by those who work there. At this time of year, it is especially important to say in this place how much we owe to the people who work in the Nottingham health authority and who provide such a caring service to my constituents.

We are all pleased that people live longer, but we must recognise that that inevitably puts pressure on the health service. It is also important to recognise the magnificent advances in medical science, particularly during the past 10 years. Today we can do so much more than we could before, but that too costs more money, and it requires successful economic policies to deliver the sort of growth that the NHS will need if it is to continue to make the sort of progress in the 1990s that it made in the 1980s.

I am particularly pleased, not least because of my wife's work, that the problem of junior hospital doctors now appears to be being tackled. I know from first-hand experience that many junior hospital doctors work well in excess of 100 hours a week, and it is a scandal that that should have been the case for so long. It is important to recognise that it is not the Government who are to blame for that, although inevitably the health administration must take its share of the blame; but the medical authorities, the consultants and the British Medical Association, who have failed to recognise that a solution must be found.

Within the last few days, we have heard that junior hospital doctors are to have their hours cut to 72 hours over a period, and eventually to much fewer than that. We must recognise the importance of getting the figure below 72 hours, but 72 is a good start. I am delighted that we are to look at shift working, because that is the right way forward, the more flexible use of part-time doctors and cross-cover, which all have a major role to play. Above all, the 200 new consultants and 50 new staff grades are extremely important and will make a big difference.

Finally, I reinforce a point already made so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West. In a debate about NHS funding we should stick to the facts. Let us recognise that total NHS spending in England this year will be a record £23·7 billion, an increase of nearly 45 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79. Let us recognise that the spending plans recently announced for next year bring that figure to £26·2 billion and will mean that the NHS is spending 50 per cent. more in real terms than it did when the Government took office in 1979.

Those are immensely impressive and important statistics; whatever else divides us in the House on the thrust and future of health care, let us at least recognise that we share a common assessment of the aims and objectives of what is required in health care in Britain to make the NHS a better service. But let us also recognise the significant success that has been achieved in terms of increased funding and all that that means for the NHS and for all our constituents who use it.

9.17 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) for choosing this subject for debate. I welcome the opportunity to debate the funding crisis in the NHS and to press on the Minister the demand that is being made throughout Britain and on both sides of the House for beds that have been closed to be opened and for an end to the cancellation of operations and out-patients' appointments. Special action is also needed to meet the crisis in London.

I could give hundreds of examples. My hon. Friend has given examples from her constituency and my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) gave examples from his constituency in Wales. I mention King's College hospital in my constituency. The Minister knows about that because I saw him about it in the summer with an all-party delegation of south London Members of Parliament, and I have had occasion to talk to him about it again this week and last week.

I visited the accident and emergency department of King's College hospital last Wednesday. I went there after receiving desperate phone calls from patients, staff and the community health centre. I witnessed a horrifying scene at one of London's greatest and finest teaching hospitals. I found at one of our centres of excellence a situation not unlike that which might be encountered in Romania. Its accident and emergency department was crowded, with 17 patients lying on trolleys, side by side, with not even a gap between them. They had been there all night and although doctors had said that those people needed to be admitted, it could not be done because the financial crisis affecting our entire hospital service meant that in Camberwell health authority in the summer more than 100 beds were closed—one in 10, including those in the emergency admission wards.

The Government responded not by providing extra money but by threatening doctors who admit patients other than from accident and emergency departments with disciplinary action. It is not as though the patients in question can simply be transferred to other south London hospitals. We all know that the situation at St. Thomas's and at Guy's is no better. I understand that there are plans to close two more operating theatres at Guy's, so that four of its 11 operating theatres will be closed. I understand that more than half the obstetrics and gynaecology beds will be closed, and that there will be no more cardiac or gynaecology surgery at that hospital after Christmas, except in emergency cases.

It is not just Labour Members who are expressing concern about the situation—although it is unfortunate that the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) could not make even a passing reference to the concern felt by his constituents, many of whom remain on waiting lists. However, I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman's local press receives a copy of the *Official Report* containing his speech, to see whether his constituents feel that they are being properly represented by their Member of Parliament.

The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) warned:

> "Things have got so serious now that there has to be a tranche of cash to get us through the winter. I cannot guarantee West Essex . . . that, in the next few weeks, if we go on as we are, someone is not going to die on the trolley in an emergency."

The same situation exists throughout the country. Last month, Watford general hospital decided that no more emergency operations would be performed there after Christmas. A local general practitioner, Michael Ingram, reflected the views of many people when he said:

> "Highly trained and highly paid surgeons will have nothing to do, theatres will lie empty, and my patients will just have to sit at home in pain, praying that the Government allows the hospital to re-open its wards."

The result of such developments in hospitals across London is the cancellation of out-patient appointments and of non-emergency operations. Those whose operations are cancelled must wait in pain, suffering and anxiety. Some will suffer irreparable permanent damage to their health. I cite the case of Ivy Stanley, a woman of 78, who needs constant supervision because she suffers from a diabetic eye disease. Her last appointment at Charing Cross hospital with Mr. Knowden was in August. She expected a further appointment yesterday, but received a letter from the district health authority saying that it had been cancelled and that another could not be arranged until 19 April 1991. A laser intervention can make the difference between someone's sight being saved or lost.

The consequence of desperate financial problems is block cancellations, irrespective of whether the outcome is not just pain, suffering and anxiety for the individual concerned but the risk of irreparable damage to his or her health. I hope that the Minister will address those points this evening, and will acknowledge the damage that is done to people's health by the cancellation of out-patient appointments and of operations.

No account is taken of the patient's health, only of the district health authority's bank balance. Everyone in London, perhaps with the exception of the hon. Member for Harrow, West, knows that the situation is desperate.

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

The Department of Health knows it, too. Figures issued yesterday by the Department show that, from April 1989 to April this year, the four Thames regions lost 5 per cent. of their beds—4,311 beds lost in one year. Those figures are devastating. They reflect the picture until April this year. Since April, because of the financial crisis and the action taken to divert deficits, the position has got even worse, and the pace of bed closures has accelerated.

A survey undertaken by *The Independent Magazine* showed that in 25 of the districts of the four Thames regions, since April this year, a further 1,762 beds have been cut. Patients are anxious and in pain and doctors and nurses are in a permanent state of crisis, as managers are pushed to take more and more drastic action. There seems to be no light at the end of the tunnel.

I hope that when the Minister responds he can tell us that there is some hope for people whose operations have been cancelled, and for the doctors and nurses who see that beds have been closed. No Minister with even the remotest commitment to the health service could allow this to continue and seek to justify it.

People in London will judge the Government by their experience of what is happening to their health care, rather than by the quantity of press releases issued by the Department of Health. The Secretary of State must take action to end the crisis in London's hospitals. He should undertake an emergency review of the situation there, and make a statement to the House when we return in the new year. His response cannot be to continue to confine the flame to supposed bad management and to announce new money which is not actually there.

In the past decade we have lost 16 per cent. of hospital beds—71,149 beds have been cut from the national health service between 1979 and 1989. Throughout the country the situation is worsening this year.

I refer the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) to the fact that in central Nottinghamshire, since April, 24 beds have been cut, and in Nottingham between April and November a further 70 beds were cut. It is unfortunate that he did not see fit to mention that in his speech.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell *rose*——

Ms. Harman: I had better get on. The hon. Gentleman has had his chance to speak, and I do not want to take up the Minister's time, because we are all hoping that there might be light at the end of the tunnel.

The examples from Lothian, Wakefield, Christie hospital in Manchester and throughout the country show the same picture—beds closed and operations cancelled.

Last night, the Secretary of State issued a press statement, which was clearly intended to give people the impression that help was on its way. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) mentioned that. Sadly, help is not on its way. It is bad enough for the Government to preside over the closure of beds and wards, and the cancellation of operations, but it adds insult to injury to give people false hope that things will get better. The Secretary of State's press release was entitled, "Cash Increases for All Regions". However, he was merely re-announcing sums already announced in the autumn statement. His statement last night will not reopen one single closed bed.

Tonight, the Minister has the chance to say which closed beds, in all the areas that I have mentioned throughout the country, will be reopened. Will a single bed be reopened as a result of last night's announcement? Which cancelled operations will be reinstated as a result of the announcement made last night? Will it make any difference to people who have to wait overnight on trolleys in King's College hospital? I fear that it will not.

I welcome the announcement that the Government are slowing the pace towards the introduction of capitation-based funding, but it appears to be a slowdown in the creation of the infrastructure of the internal market. Apparently, they are not ready to recognise, and to take practical steps to redress, the underfunding of the NHS. It is a pity that the slowdown in the introduction of the capitation-based funding does not signal a change of mood in the Department, following the arrival of a new Prime Minister and a new Secretary of State. If there had been such a change of mood, the first act of the new Secretary of State would not have been to opt 56 hospitals out of the national health service, against the wishes of local people.

People are waiting for their hospitals to be restored so that they can obtain the treatment and care that they need, when they need it. They do not want a two-tier system, which forces them to "go private" because that is the only alternative to waiting in pain and suffering; nor do they want the NHS to be commercialised, with hospitals competing to offer the cheapest contract. It is because we listen, and know what people want, that the next Labour Government—despite what was said by the hon. Member for Harrow, West—will abolish the internal market, return the hospitals that have opted out to the local health service and end the underfunding of that service.

Even when fully funded, the NHS is not perfect. It needs to change and to move forward—but the most fundamental change that it needs is a change of Government.

9.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The House is indebted to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who tabled this subject for debate. I am particularly indebted to her for the opportunity to assess the respective NHS funding records of the present Government and their predecessor. Understandably, the hon. Lady did not speak on the subject that she had tabled, except when my hon. Friends and I intervened.

The fact is that, since 1979, the present Government have increased the total funding of the NHS by an average of 3 per cent. per annum in real terms, while the last Labour Government increased it by a real-terms average of 1·5 per cent. We have increased the funding at twice the rate of our predecessor. To talk of a funding crisis, as the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) has done, is to prompt the question: how much worse would the position be if Labour had remained in office, increasing funds at the rate that it was able to achieve?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) pointed out, this is the first Government in the history of this country to be able to demonstrate that we fund the NHS more generously than we fund the defence budget. The last Labour Government cut the NHS capital programme by 16 per cent. in real terms, whereas we have

increased it by 62 per cent. That is our record, and that is why I am so grateful to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich for giving us the opportunity to debate it.

NHS funding, however, is not the whole story. What matters to patients is not the level of funding, but the level of activity—the number of patients whose conditions are treated by the NHS, and the number of ill people who present themselves for treatment and leave in an improved condition. Since 1979, the NHS has provided its patients with a dramatically improved service: as my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West pointed out, we have seen a 20 per cent. increase in the number of in-patients treated, and a virtual doubling of the number of day cases treated. Whether we measure the service in terms of the resources put into it or in terms of the number of patients treated, the present Government's record is one of which we can and should be proud.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister tell us whether his waiting lists are going up or down?

Mr. Dorrell: With pleasure. The waiting list for in-patients is now 6 per cent. lower than it was when we came to power in May 1979. Although the total number of in-patients treated has risen by 20 per cent., the number waiting to be treated has fallen. Moreover, half the total number of patients treated by the NHS as in-patients are admitted immediately, without having to go on to a waiting list, while 50 per cent. of the other half are admitted within six weeks. Some patients have to wait a long time for treatment, but the great majority of NHS patients are not the victims of long waiting lists.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich suggested that, in his announcement yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health attempted to fudge his way, as the hon. Lady put it, out of the problems that face a few district health authorities this year. There was some coverage of that issue in this morning's papers. The £81 million that has been set aside to reduce the unacceptably high level of NHS creditors has not been properly reported and is in danger of being misunderstood. That money is to be provided in next year's budget. It will not be provided in the current financial year. The money will be the subject of an accurately targeted programme to ensure that it is used to reduce the number of creditors. They are the residue of inadequate financial control in previous years. The money will not provide us with the opportunity to fudge our way out of some of the undoubted difficulties that face a few district health authorities this year.

Both the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich and the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) spoke at length about bed closures. Labour spokesmen find that bed closures are the best means to demonstrate what they believe to be our inadequate provision of NHS beds. Bed closures are, in part, a measure of the improvements in the quality of health care that is offered by the NHS. The majority of treatments now available under the NHS require shorter stays in hospital. There are fewer beds in the NHS, but we treat more patients. Patients do not want to spend time in hospital. If we are ill, we want treatment in hospital and then to be allowed to go home. If we treat more patients in fewer beds, that does not mean tighter management but the delivery to patients of a better health service. Advances in modern medicine enable conditions to be treated in a way that is less traumatic for the patient, which means that they have to spend shorter periods in hospital.

Ms. Harman: Would the Minister have us believe that the cuts in NHS beds throughout the country, in response to the financial crisis, are good?

Mr. Dorrell: If by any mischance the hon. Lady ever became a Department of Health Minister, I hope that she would recognise that there is no point in keeping open beds that reflect the health treatment patterns or methods of 10 or 20 years ago. We can treat conditions now that entail shorter stays in hospital because modern medicine is less traumatic for the patient; he or she is able to recover from the operation or treatment in a shorter period. That benefits the patient. There is no need for us to apologise about that. It reflects medical progress, about which I, at least, am proud.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West referred to laundries and insisted that it was in the interests of the NHS that they should be the subject of competitive tendering. I agree with him entirely. During the past 10 years competitive tendering has saved the NHS £200 million. That money is now available for better quality health care for NHS patients. That is important progress. My hon. Friend also drew attention to the difficulties caused when health authorities hoard land. I agree that that is an inappropriate use of public resources.

The hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) asked about prescribing methods, particularly the prescription of a drug that he pronounced in full but which, if he will forgive me, I shall confine myself to describing, as most doctors do, as EPO. The relevant factor in that case is which doctor has clinical responsibility. It is important that a patient who is prescribed a drug is confident that the doctor prescribing it is clinically responsible for managing his condition. That criterion has always determined such matters in England, and I am sure that the same is true in Wales.

I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's questions on the regional elective surgery centres and the future of the open-heart surgery centre to the attention of my hon. Friends in the Welsh Office, who I am sure will reply to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) asked about the importance of the Audit Commission. He played a distinguished role in ensuring that it was given the opportunity to comment on conditions in the NHS, and I am glad to join him in welcoming its contribution.

The hon. Member for Peckham asked for an element of integrity in this debate. I entirely agree and should like to conclude by making an offer to her—that in approaching the subject we start by accepting each other's bona fides. If the Government had wanted to dismantle the national health service, they have had 12 years in which to do so. We have not done so, because we believe in its future and want to develop it. Our record shows that we have been able to develop it, and we shall go on developing it because we believe in it.

North Sea (Safety)

9.41 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): It is difficult not to reinforce the robust and able defence of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health of Government policy on the health service. The part of the preceding debate that I heard showed that we are winning the arguments, as usual. I wish him well.

This afternoon, it crossed my mind to raise a point of order but, knowing how pressed we were for time, I refrained from doing so and thought that I would spend the first minute of this debate on the matter. When I moved new clause 1 on capital punishment on Monday, my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Janman) was one of several hon. Members who intervened in my speech. He made a point about miscarriages of justice. I obviously misunderstood what he said, because I said that I did not agree with him. Having had the opportunity of checking *Hansard*, I should like to put the record straight and say that I agree with him very much. More to the point, are not we very fortunate to have the *Hansard* writers and printers doing such a splendid job for us, along with all the other staff? I should like to take this opportunity to wish them, and you, Mr. Speaker, a happy Christmas.

I am glad to have the opportunity of raising an issue on the Adjournment under the Consolidated Fund Bill for the first time. Many subjects demand and deserve our attention, and, like many other hon. Members, I never find it easy to decide which should take priority when dropping you, Mr. Speaker, a note before the ballot on what subject I might wish to raise. Pressing local constituency matters may demand too much attention, and sometimes we fail to raise often enough wider and more general issues that are of great importance. I believe this to be one such issue.

Christmas is a time for the family, but many people will be working over the Christmas holiday in our hospitals, in police forces and fire stations or in ensuring the essential supply of energy to cook the Christmas lunch. At the beginning of that energy chain are the men who work on the oil and gas platforms around our coast, particularly in the North sea. In the light of recent developments, I felt that it would be opportune to discuss before the recess safety on North sea installations.

I should declare a personal interest in this subject, as my father-in-law and my brother-in-law have worked for many years on North sea platforms as engineers. My father-in-law was involved in drilling many of the oil wells before production commenced.

Offshore installations present unique safety problems. A production platform is a community in its own right, which encompasses drilling operations, a refinery and nothing less than a hotel. All those functions are squeezed into a space of a few hundred feet each way—even rather less than we enjoy at the Palace of Westminster. There is also a helicopter landing area on each platform. On land, such operations would be spread over tens of acres. An oil platform is not just compact, but must be self-sufficient in an emergency; there is no question of waiting for the fire brigade to arrive. Therefore, the means of surviving an emergency while staying on the platform are crucial and critical. The means of escape and evacuation, if necessary, are equally important.

Oil and gas platforms represent extremely complex technology that is sited in a uniquely hostile environment. Recent events reminded us just how hostile that environment can be as huge waves and storm force winds took the lives of six men in a fishing vessel, washed over an oil installation and took lifeboats away. When I look out to the North sea from the safe haven of Filey on the north Yorkshire coast, I am struck by a grey sombre sight, particularly at this time of year. When the wind is blowing from the north-east, I find it remarkable that oil and gas operations can be maintained at all.

Tragically, over the years, there have been a number of incidents involving loss of life, of which the Piper Alpha disaster was perhaps the worst. As the House knows, on 6 July 1988 a series of explosions ripped through the Piper Alpha platform, following what Lord Cullen believes was a gas leak caused by night staff in the gas compression module who tried to restart a pump unaware of the fact that a safety valve had been removed.

Following an 80-day inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Cullen, sweeping changes in North sea safety were recommended. The Government immediately accepted those recommendations when the report was published and brought to the House on 12 November. This debate provides an opportunity for the House to demonstrate its concern that all those recommendations should be implemented without delay and for the Government to report progress and give a more measured and deliberate response.

Some feel that the Piper Alpha tragedy was perhaps the worst in the history of oil exploration and extraction in the world. As a result of that disaster, 160 men lost their lives —it must never, never happen again.

Other tragedies have occurred even since the Piper Alpha tragedy, which underlines the dangers of oil and gas operations in the North sea and the urgent need for improved safety. In the past two and a half years, there have been at least 30 serious incidents and nine deaths on installations off our coasts. Even the day before the Piper Alpha disaster, management on Shell's Brent Alpha platform, east of Shetland, evacuated part of the installation after a gas explosion. Three months later, there was a serious fire on the Ocean Odyssey drilling rig, again after a gas blast, which killed a radio operator—thankfully, 66 workers were rescued. Only last July, six crew and passengers on a Sikorsky S61 helicopter were killed when it hit a crane in the Brent field. In 1988, two other S61s were ditched and 34 men were rescued. In November last year, a rig, Interocean 11, sank in bad weather and the crew was rescued by helicopter. Last January, an accommodation platform in the Brent field, Safe Gothia, was evacuated after winds snapped two anchor cables.

Since oil and gas exploration began in the 1960s, about 500 lives have been lost in the North sea. I am sure that the House wishes to pay every tribute to the bravery of the men who have helped our economy and who put up with such dreadful conditions. At this Christmas time, we should send every sympathy to the families and loved ones of those who have died.

The tragedy of the Piper Alpha disaster is that, as Lord Cullen's report showed, if more had been done beforehand it might have been avoided. Sadly, that is true of many other disasters of recent years. The two dreadful incidents at football grounds in Yorkshire—at Bradford and at Hillsborough, in Sheffield—the Clapham rail crash, the

sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise all come to mind. In all those cases greater attention to detail would have prevented loss of life.

Following Piper Alpha, many have argued that the implementation of the recommendations of the 1980 Burgoyne committee should have gone further. I expect that there will continue to be disagreement among hon. Members on that point for some time, particularly among those who have a special knowledge of the industry which, I must confess, I have not. However, there are two points on which we should be able to agree.

First, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy told the House on 12 November:

"In 1980, the Government accepted the majority view of the Burgoyne committee, which was set up by the previous Labour Government. It said that, on balance, it believed that the best case for safety in the North sea was to leave the matter with the Department of Energy."—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1980; Vol. 180, c. 333.]

In 1990, 10 years later, Lord Cullen recommended that, on balance—again, it is a matter of balance, as my right hon. Friend said—the best case is for transferring responsibility to the Health and Safety Commission. The Government have accepted the recommendations of the majority committee in both cases and they are to be commended for that.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State also pointed out that North sea operations have become more complex over the past 10 years and that the Health and Safety Commission has developed its expertise. More importantly, Lord Cullen found no evidence that the Department of Energy put production before safety.

The second point on which we can agree is the role of the owner of Piper Alpha, Occidental. Lord Cullen concluded that there were significant flaws in the way in which safety was managed by Occidental. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) asked the Secretary of State on 12 November whether Occidental would be prosecuted. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, as well as the families and communities of those who were killed, shared the view that Occidental should be prosecuted. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was surely right immediately to send Lord Cullen's report to the Lord Advocate, and there the matter must rest for the time being.

The House must now ensure that, in future, North sea operations are safer then they have been in the past. Safety must be paramount. We all recognise the inherent dangers in working in the North sea, but we must not take unnecessary risks with other men's lives. The Piper Alpha disaster suggests that we may have done so in the past. We must never do so again.

The whole House has rightly given a warm welcome to Lord Cullen's most impressive and penetrating report. The extent of his deliberations is revealed in the fact that the weighty document that I hold in my left hand is only the first of two volumes.

Drawing, no doubt, on the experience of his assessors, Lord Cullen has provided a most comprehensive analysis of the conditions necessary for the safe management of offshore installations. I am sure that the report contains lessons for the safe management of other industrial activities. The report is the most significant landmark in the evolution of offshore safety since the most recent legislation—the Mineral Workings (Offshore Installations) Act 1971.

Lord Cullen's report rightly concludes that safety in such a demanding environment as the North sea cannot be secured by fixed rules or off-the-peg solutions. We need a flexible approach and the ability to evaluate the best compromise between conflicting safety objectives. Solutions have to take account of the varying circumstances of individual installations. That is why Lord Cullen was right to suggest that every installation must be assessed. He provided a comprehensive list of what a good safety management would incorporate. It would need to cover

"organisational structure, management personnel standards, training, for operations in emergencies, safety assessment, design procedures, procedures for operations, maintenance modifications and emergencies, management of safety by contractors in respect of their work, the involvement of the work force (operators and contractors) in safety, accident and incident reporting, investigation and follow-up, monitoring and auditing of the operation of the system and systematic reappraisal of the system in the light of the experience of the operator and the industry."

I make no apology for listing the important objectives which Lord Cullen identified. I am sure that the House will agree that the recommendations rightly place the responsibility where it belongs—with the owners and operators of the installations.

The oil industry is one of our most dynamic industries. It has shown great inventiveness and resourcefulness, not least in maintaining the economic viability of North sea production when world prices fell sharply in the mid-1980s. I gladly acknowledge, too, that the Government have played their part by keeping an open mind on taxation issues and making adjustments where the case has been made. The industry deserves credit for its adaptability and ingenuity. The oil industry should also have the freedom to apply its drive, adaptability and ingenuity to safety problems. It is tempting to say that there must be definite rules and a clearly prescribed approach, but such an assertion is fallacious. In real life—in the practical world—reasonable safety objectives often conflict with each other, and Lord Cullen recognised that. A better standard of safety depends on achieving the best trade-off between those conflicts, and not in a prescriptive, rule-book approach.

I particularly welcome Lord Cullen's report for its clear recognition that the operators must play a more extensive and fundamental role in choosing the best means in each case to attain the defined standards. A programme of work for the installation of emergency shutdown valves on offshore platforms is also important. With the approach of the 31 December deadline—another reason for having the debate tonight—I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to bring the House up to date on the progress that has already been made.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I may be able to help my hon. Friend on this critical point. Oil companies have generally made good progress with the installation of emergency shutdown valves—to date more than 134 valves have been fitted and a number of others are expected to be completed by the end of the year. However, a number of applications for temporary exemptions have been received and have been rigorously scrutinised in detail by my Department's inspectors. In considering those applications, my inspectors have taken into account the fact that, in all cases, emergency valves exist but are not optimally located.

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

Therefore, I have decided that a number of new compulsory measures must be implemented by operators to enhance safety until the new valves are installed in those cases where production is to be permitted to be continued. They include reducing the pipeline operating pressures, switching from live crude oil production to dead crude oil and introducing enhanced operating procedures. We have received applications for 53 valves, of which we have agreed 25 exemptions. Some 24 have been withdrawn after discussions with my inspectors and four have been refused. Rigorous conditions will be attached to all such exemptions in order to enhance safety. In addition, applications in respect of four valves on the Texaco Tartan, Mobil and Beryl Alpha platforms have been rejected on the basis of information received.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my hon. Friend for his important statement, which clearly could not come too early either in this debate or in general terms. I am sure that those involved will welcome his statement for the clear way in which it set out the progress that has been made and what more needs to be done. I am sure that my hon. Friend will have other interesting matters to report to the House when he responds to the debate.

It is also right that, within the North sea, there must be proper controls and monitoring of safety standards. They must be more flexible than in the past, but nevertheless remain defined, understood and enforced. That places substantial demands on the enforcement agency, which must deploy a high level of expertise to be able to evaluate and respond to new approaches brought forward by the industry. That will not be a cheap option, but I am convinced that it is right.

Lord Cullen was correct in feeling that we should be circumspect about legislating safety into an industrial activity. The disadvantages of over-detailed legislation were highlighted by the Robens committee that began its work 20 years ago and published its report on health and safety at work in 1974. Its objections to over-detailed legislation on safety matters still seem to be valid and were in many ways vindicated by what Lord Cullen said in his report. Safety must spring from the initiative and active concern of the company and its own determination to tackle safety problems. It has to find the right system, and the means, and to put them into effect. It must then ensure, by training and monitoring, that they are applied and continue to be applied.

I think that it will be accepted on both sides of the House that it is essential that companies involve all their workers. I am aware that there has been some controversy about union recognition in the North sea installations. That is a quite separate issue from safety. Whether they are members of staff, employees, production workers, sub-contractors, members of unions or not, they must all be properly involved in safety. In a highly critical safety area such as offshore installations, every worker must perceive his proper contribution to safety, and have the knowledge and training to play his part. That must mean better communication than in the past.

I refer for the final time to volume 1 of Lord Cullen's report, which dealt with why the explosions occurred. He made one important statement:

"From the evidence I conclude that this"—

the failure of the system—

"was due to a failure in the transmission of information under the permit to work system and at shift handover".

So even at the most mundane level of operations, communication between staff—each member of staff understanding the others' roles and the importance of every procedure that he carries out—cannot be given too high a priority.

Safety must not merely be sold as a philosophy or some vague concept to the worker by means of exhortation. Dialogue with the worker and involvement in everything he does is essential to a safe working environment.

Lord Cullen's report was also greatly to be welcomed because it faces up to the difficulties and tackles them squarely. It proposes a framework that is flexible as to solutions but ensures that all the right questions have been asked. It avoids detailed prescriptions for hardware or management systems, but it puts the initiative and responsibility where they belong—with the operators and employers. Equally, it provides a stringent basis for probing examination by the regulatory body.

There will have to be real dialogue, not a rigid imposition of predetermined rules. The regulatory body will need a high degree of expertise and, more importantly, adequate resources. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made general promises in that direction, but I hope that the Minister will say more this evening about these points. In addition, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) told the House on 12 November during questions on the statement about the publication of the report, the new regulatory body should and must be independent and seen to be so. That view is shared throughout the industry and this House.

I make no apology for returning to the critical importance of monitoring. It is not enough for proper principles to be endorsed by management in the form of manuals of safety left standing on the shelf gathering dust, or in the workplace. The principles must be put into and kept in effect. I referred earlier to the Clapham railway tragedy. The report on that incident showed what a contrast there can be between sound principles and their adequate practical implementation. It is right to emphasise monitoring and the new proposals for systematic audit by the operator and for the audit and inspection of that activity by the regulator.

Lord Cullen does not make the point, although I believe it strongly, that the insurers have a distinct role to play in monitoring and enforcing standards. The Piper Alpha tragedy claim was, I understand, for £1·4 billion. Insurers will surely be asking themselves whether the disaster could have been avoided if Lord Cullen's proposals had been in force before it happened. The claim was for £1·4 billion, but it should not take the loss of the lives of 167 men to reach a proper definition of an adequate safety regime for operations in the North sea. The insurers have continuous contact with and influence over the companies that they insure. Just the other day, an insurance representative told me that a private insurance company would have refused to insure King's Cross underground station as a private place because the fire safety arrangements were clearly inadequate.

The Cullen report is the basis for effective regulation of safety and has been recognised as such. The oil and gas industry is important to our economy. It has made a major contribution in the last decade, and I am sure that it will continue to do so in the next decade and into the next

century. But it is a dangerous industry; and we must maintain proper standards within a dynamic system that is capable of growing.

I am glad that the Government have been able to accept all the recommendations. They must now ensure prompt and effective implementation of this highly significant report's blueprint for the future. That will require careful planning, a systematic approach and, as Lord Cullen recommends, proper consultation about contractors' interests. It will also mean new staffing and training for the regulatory agency.

A separate offshore safety division at the Department of Industry was set up on 10 December. I first read about it in *The Engineer* and I understand that it is under the direction of Tony Barrell, who is the current director of technology in the Health and Safety Executive. That is a significant first step and will help to ease the transfer of responsibility for offshore safety from the Department of Energy to the Health and Safety Commission, as Lord Cullen recommended. The commission has welcomed that transfer, but has again called for more Government resources to do the job properly.

The House should not be under any illusions about the costs involved in assessing every offshore installation. As the Health and Safety Commission chairman, John Culler, has said, those costs will be substantial. Resources must be found so that Lord Cullen's vision for a safer North sea will soon become a reality. The lives of husbands, fathers, sons and brothers working in the North sea this Christmas deserve nothing less.

10.13 pm

Mr. Frank Doran (Aberdeen, South): I thank the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) for raising this issue, because it is not debated often enough. I hope that, in the new year, we will have an opportunity fully to discuss all the implications of the Cullen report. Not only is this a vital industry employing almost 50,000 people, but it plays a vital part in the country's economy.

The Under-Secretary of State for Energy made a mini-statement on the installation of shutdown valves. It is worth reminding the House of the circumstances in which the issue of shutdown valves was raised. Those valves were a major cause of the scale of the Piper Alpha disaster. There were no shutdown valves in a safe place on the platform and tonnes of gas were released on to the platform when the valves which were in place there were damaged by explosion. The cause of the disaster was the failure to have adequate cut-off mechanisms between the surrounding platforms, the Tartan and MCPO1, and Piper Alpha. As a result, all the gas in the pipeline was released to Piper Alpha.

I wrote to the then Secretary of State for Energy on 14 July 1988, just eight days after the disaster, setting out the case for emergency shutdown valves to be located on the sea bed, a safe place away from the structure, so that, if a similar incident occurred, the valves would be at no risk whatever.

About a month later, I received a letter from the head of safety in the Department, saying that it accepted the argument for sub-sea valves and intended to legislate as quickly as possible in the circumstances. That commitment has been watered down somewhat, although I am aware that many of the companies in the North sea have decided that, without Government regulation, they will install sub-sea valves. Occidental and Texaco, the two companies most affected by the Piper Alpha tragedy, made that decision, and many others have followed suit. The Government have yet to introduce the regulations that were promised to me in August 1988. Therefore, I should like the Minister to tell us where we are on that important issue.

The Minister has made a significant and full statement about the requests made by a number of oil companies for exemption from the regulations that require the top-side valves to be relocated before the end of the year. I accept that there has been a thorough investigation, but must ask why it is that these applications were made, and we have had a response from the Minister so late in the day. This is a crucial issue. Location of sub-sea values is a technical issue, and I do not pretend to understand it fully, but I am aware of the problems of location and of the fact that responsibility for location and inspection of location were highlighted by the Burgoyne committee as far back as 1981. There appears to have been no action since. Paragraph 5·64 of the report makes specific reference to the grey area of the pipeline. We saw the predictions in that report unfortunately and tragically fulfilled in what happened to Piper Alpha.

That tragedy happened on the night of 6 July and the early morning of 7 July 1988, and now, at the end of 1990, a large number of oil companies, are still asking for exemptions. It is noticeable that this includes the largest of the oil companies. In particular, Shell has received exemption for 14 of the sub-sea valves in the Brent system. As one of the largest operators, it has one of the largest problems, so it is difficult to understand why so many exemptions have been granted in that field. Shell has had the same amount of time as every other operator in the North sea to install the valves. Is there something about the Brent field that requires that number of exemptions to be granted?

I should like some explanation of what the Minister means by "restrictive conditions". He has described three areas where there will be more restrictions and these seem to be sensible moves when the sub-sea valves are not to be installed immediately. However, we need to know what implication that has for the overall safety of the platform. What consideration has been given to that?

What time scale will apply to the exemptions? When are the sub-sea valves to be finally installed? It is not good enough to leave our work force out there in the North sea, albeit with these new restrictions, without the essential safety of the removal of the valves to a safe location on the platform. This is particularly so when we know that the platforms involved—the Forties, the Brent system, Thistle, Murchison and Balmoral—are among the oldest in the North sea. Consequently, they have the highest risk.

In any debate on North sea safety, the Piper Alpha tragedy overshadows every aspect of our discussions. Many tributes have been paid to Lord Cullen for the clarity of his report, the detail of it and the precision that he applied. I believe that the report will often be referred to by generations to come as a model for the way in which such issues should be addressed. I hope that it will not need to be referred to too often. Lord Cullen brought to his task all the best qualities of the Scottish lawyer. The Scottish legal system is based on principle, not on precise rules. Lord Cullen sought—I believe that he achieved his objective—to apply principles and to explain and set out the principles which should apply to safety in the North

[Mr. Frank Doran]

sea. The report has been welcomed by all. Given the fraught nature of the industry, especially in the context of industrial relations, it is a tribute to Lord Cullen that he was able to produce a report to which everyone was able to agree.

Crucial issues arise from the report, not the least of which is the transfer of responsibility from the Department of Energy to the Health and Safety Executive. Lord Cullen was emphatic that there were major difficulties in the Department of Energy, one of which was resourcing. There was a failure to apply the mind—I blame the political mind—to ensure that North sea safety was properly policed. There was a lack of real political direction. It is clear that the safety inspectorate was the Cinderella of the Department. The efforts of the Department rapidly to increase salaries and to appoint a new safety director before the Cullen report were cynical moves.

But enough of that carping criticism. We must look forward. The question of blame lies in the past. Lord Cullen has reported on that and his words are clear. We must ensure that the Piper Alpha tragedy does not recur. There must be an adequate system of supervision. Everyone must know exactly what his or her task is. Responsibility must be allocated fairly.

There is still no precise detail about when the complete transfer of responsibility will take place. Several possible dates have been suggested, the most likely of which seems to be 1 April 1991. There is an urgent need for the Government to define precisely where responsibility for safety lies in the interim period of transfer from the Department of Energy to the Health and Safety Executive. Many of Lord Cullen's recommendations require urgent action by the industry. The representatives of oil companies whom I meet regularly have told me that they wish to proceed quickly to implement the recommendations. I have firm evidence to substantiate that from my contact with them.

The industry requires prompt technical discussions with the regulatory body to define and agree the detailed interpretation of the report and, of course, its consequences. There are specific examples to show that delay would be inexcusable. The first is the preparation of a safety case for each installation. That is the most far-reaching of Lord Cullen's recommendations. It will lead to the provision of a complete dossier to demonstrate that the operator has identified the major hazards of the installation and has provided appropriate controls, that the operator has provided in each installation a temporary safe refuge for personnel in the event of a major emergency and means of evacuation, escape and rescue, and that the operator's safety management system is adequate to ensure the safe design and operation of the installation.

There is an urgent need for the Government to provide expert advice to operators on the detailed scope, format and timetable for the safety case. I hope that the Minister will give us some idea of who will do this and when it will be done.

Another consideration is acceptance standards for risk of death offshore. Lord Cullen's fifth main recommendation concerns setting acceptance standards for overall risk of death or injury to personnel on an installation. Standards are also to be set for the endurance of the temporary safe refuge during major emergencies. Initially, these standards are to be set by the regulatory body. They will be the most important standards to be set. They will determine ultimately the risks of accidents or death to offshore workers. They form the cornerstone of any safety case, as all the elements of the safety case, taken together, must satisfy the overall acceptance standards.

Those standards must be determined quickly, because without them work on the safety cases for new and existing installations cannot be taken very far. It is also important that the process for setting those standards be open to discussion and scrutiny by all parties with a legitimate interest, including operators and offshore workers and their representatives. Who is responsible for setting those standards? What process will be followed? What is the timetable for conclusion?

There is also a question about the resources for the Health and Safety Executive. We understand that the executive and the Treasury are discussing the matter. It is determining what its budget is likely to be, and clearly it has a long and uphill struggle with the Treasury to achieve an adequate budget. The system that prevails in the Department of Energy, which led to inadequate supervision and to criticism by Lord Cullen, cannot continue. The HSE must be adequately resourced. I hope that the Treasury's starting point in its discussions with the HSE will not be the miserly payment made to the HSE each year for the Department's expenditure on safety. As was shown in an answer to a parliamentary question of mine just over a year ago, that amounted to £500,000 a year. It is clear that the safety system envisaged by Lord Cullen cannot be provided for that sort of money. It is important that the Department of Energy, and the Secretary of State in particular, put their full weight behind the HSE's arguments.

Recommendation 22 says that the regulatory body should review its procedures for consultation with representatives of employers and of offshore employees in preparing new guidance notes on safety offshore. Lord Cullen made it clear that he fully recognised the value of involving those who work offshore in the new safety regime. We expect that the Health and Safety Commission, as a tripartite body overseeing the HSE, will share that view and ensure that proper mechanisms for consultation are developed. It is not sufficient only to involve the work force through existing installation safety committees. Many of the new guidance notes will affect the design of new installations and will cover complex technical and engineering matters.

The only effective means of representation for offshore workers on such matters is through the trade unions, and I shall say more about that later. They have the resources to commission studies and to present findings to the HSE. All the trade unions involved with the HSE onshore have developed technical departments that can give advice to work forces. Certainly, offshore that advice will be crucial and fundamental. Large sections of the offshore work force wish to be represented by their trade unions in the new safety regime, yet employers have stubbornly resisted that change.

Anyone seriously interested in achieving high safety standards recognises that the genuine and informed participation of the work force is essential. The more enlightened companies offshore recognise that that applies not only to safety, but to overall quality and the success of the whole enterprise. Is it not time that the Government

took on board that message and encouraged employers to be more co-operative towards trade union representation offshore?

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): How might that be achieved? Many of my constituents work in the offshore industry, and their experience is that safety officers are often NRB-ed—that is, not required back—when they are sent on leave. Anyone involved in that sort of representation frequently ends up without a job.

Mr. Doran: I am surprised to have the hon. Gentleman on my side. We have been hammering away about that issue for years. I am being careful not to criticise the industry too much because I know that progress is being made. I shall be happy to discuss with the hon. Gentleman any examples of discrimination that have been reported to him. I am pleased that he has been able to add to the views that have been expressed to me by my constituents who work offshore, but who are consistently denied representation by the Government and the oil companies. Clearly, the independence of the health and safety representative and the health and safety committee is crucial. Employers onshore have learnt that an independent committee can enhance and improve safety as long as they are prepared to trust their work forces. That clearly is not the position offshore at the moment.

Many oil companies refuse to trust their work forces and to allow them to participate through their trade unions. The companies will pay the price in poor productivity and high operating costs, of which there are many examples in the North sea. The areas with the lowest productivity and the highest operating costs have the worst industrial relations.

The country pays the price in lost oil production. Offshore workers may pay the highest price of all because of poor safety. Oil companies risk their capital; oil workers risk their lives. That is becoming a cliché, but it is true. Piper Alpha, Brent Spar and all the other incidents show that, as well as the many unreported deaths offshore.

There have been significant developments in industrial relations during the past few days. During the past two years there have been some serious offshore disputes, and there is a real threat of industrial problems again next year. At the root is the genuine sense of frustration felt by the work force as a result of its working conditions. The oil companies tend not to trust their employees—at least the majority do not. They tend to operate a system which militates against communication and the development of skills and identification with a particular workplace.

Almost two thirds of employees offshore are employed through the user contracting system. There is no continuity of employment. The expression NRB is common in my office. If a man's card is stamped NRB he is not required back because he is a trouble-maker or a safety representative who asked the wrong questions. That is the history of the North sea and it is a problem which needs to be dealt with. I am pleased that the oil companies seem to be coming round to recognising that, but there is still a long way to go.

It is worth mentioning the offshore industry liaison committee, an unofficial body that has been established in my constituency in Aberdeen and seeks to represent the work force offshore.

Mr. Devlin: I thought that it was in Newcastle.

Mr. Doran: It is in Glasgow, Newcastle, Hull and Great Yarmouth, but its main base is in Aberdeen. It has established other bases round the country because of the migrant work force which moves to Aberdeen from those places.

The people who formed the OLC recognised that the major problems for the work force offshore were not being met by the trade unions. It is appropriate here to recognise that the trade unions have not always represented their members quite as they should have done, mainly because of the difficulties of representing a mobile work force. Men move from rig to rig and from platform to platform at short notice, employed by a company based onshore, but working offshore. They work for a number of different oil companies, many of which employ the same contractors. Therefore, it is difficult to represent the work force and the OLC has filled the vacuum. It has been behind the industrial action during the past two years.

It is significant to record the amount of support from offshore workers that the OLC has enjoyed. Several thousand workers responded by taking industrial action —not by any means the whole work force, but certainly a significant proportion of it, and enough to cause real difficulties during the past two summers. The oil companies have been forced to respond by looking at their working practices, not only because of Lord Cullen's report, which makes extremely important recommendations, but because of the success of the action carried out by the OLC. It is clear, too, that the official trade unions now recognise the difficulties involved, and are working hard to improve the position of their members offshore.

I am pleased at reports today that the employer's body —the Offshore Contractors Council—has offered to enter into discussions with the trade unions. There is not total satisfaction with the offer, because it seems fairly restricted, but at least it is a beginning. Discussions will take place with the unions about a possible agreement covering certain categories of offshore workers.

The trade union movement will certainly be seeking other agreements, to ensure some regulation of offshore employment and worker protection, and that terms and conditions of employment are standardised and improved. The oil companies offer very satisfactory terms and conditions to their own work forces, but they are, in the main, denied to the workers who are employed by contractors—even though they may be doing the same work side by side with oil workers. There is often a huge disparity between them, and that adds to the frustration.

Mr. Devlin: The hon. Gentleman has a wide knowledge of the industry near his constituency, but there are enormous discrepancies between the conditions on some of the older North sea platforms and those on the newer ones. When I visited the Brent field in the summer, I noted that the accommodation ships moored alongside the Brent were used because the accommodation available on the Brent itself is rather poor. Workers prefer the conditions on the more comfortable Swedish and Finnish accommodation ships. All platforms should be brought up to the standards of the best.

I and my constituents welcome the Cullen report's recommendation that responsibility for safety and for safety inspection should be taken out of the hands of the Department, which has not fulfilled its obligations in that respect very well, and be put into the hands of the Health and Safety Executive. Many would like the same

[Mr. Devlin]

conditions to prevail in the North sea as prevail on land, where an independent inspectorate is available to conduct surprise visits and to examine conditions on behalf of the work force. That is what we all want, and we should welcome such a development.

Mr. Doran: Again, I welcome the hon. Gentleman's agreement with the position that I have often stated. I am pleased that we are finally having an effect, which is enhanced in the case of the hon. Gentleman because of his experience of offshore workers in his constituency.

Some companies are finally making progress. When I visited the Ninian field last year, I met its safety committee and had discussions with the work force. It was clear that the operating company, Chevron, has made a serious attempt to integrate its work force. It employs contractors, as does everyone else, but when it changes contractors, it tries to ensure that the work force remains stable. Chevron has reduced the barriers between its employees and those of contractors, so that everyone who works on the Ninian platform feels that he works for Chevron, no matter who pays his wages.

The company has sought to ensure also that the benefits of its new contracts with agency companies filter through to the work force. That should be done throughout the North sea. I know that the same practice operates in Conoco fields. Those are two of the better offshore companies.

The larger companies have larger problems. I am aware that both BP and Shell recently introduced new systems that should in the longer term, and perhaps in the medium term, improve the lot of offshore workers. Shell and BP decided to go for longer-term contracts and have sought to ensure that they filter through to the work force, so that there will be some continuity of employment. Of course, they have got to try to do what companies such as Chevron have done, and to break down the barriers, so that there is not the animosity and frustration and the contracting work force becomes part of a team and achieves the highest productivity for the industry and the company. Everyone will benefit from that, and there is an enhanced benefit to safety, which is what everyone wants to achieve.

It has always been my view—it is not a novel idea—that one cannot have bad industrial relations and good safety. Until the problems are dealt with properly by the companies involved, there will continue to be poor safety standards in the North sea. I am pleased to see, and I commend, companies such as BP and Shell, which are finally beginning to deal with this problem.

We have had other good news on the industrial relations scene today. One of the unfortunate consequences of the dispute in the summer was that Shell created a blacklist of employees who they were not prepared to have working on their platforms. Recently, I met the chairman of Shell, and the managing director of Shell Exploration and Production and I am pleased to say that, yesterday, the company announced that it would remove the blacklist with effect from 1 January—as I understand it, without qualification. I like to think that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) had some influence upon Shell's decision—we hope so.

In our discussions with the chairman of Shell and the managing director of the exploration company, we heard about Shell's efforts to resolve the difficulties. There was not much disagreement between us, and I hope that they will be able to secure their objectives of removing the barriers in the North sea, breaking down the distinctions between company employees and contracted employees and improving safety.

The removal of the blacklist is a crucial step, and I hope that the trade unions will respond to it and that Shell will discuss properly with the offshore trade unions the way ahead. There is a way ahead, but it involves discussions on all sides.

I was involved with the Piper Alpha families' association, which attempted to convene a conference at which the entire industry would be represented in one way or another. The Minister gave me valuable support in arranging that conference, and we hoped that the oil industry and the contractors would be able to come along and discuss, in private, with the trade unions and other interested parties—including the Health and Safety Executive and the Department of Energy representatives, the trade unions, and the families association—the issues which face the industry, how Lord Cullen's recommendations could be implemented and the problems posed by the industrial dispute.

The oil companies, through the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association, found that they could not attend that conference. I regret that because they missed an opportunity to show the public—who in my part of the world are extremely concerned about the problem of offshore safety—that they care, too. They stuck behind the barriers that they created during the industrial dispute, when they said that the dispute did not have anything to do with them, but was for the contractors, as the legal employers of the men involved. They said that they had no influence, but that is not the case. They pull the strings in the North sea and have influence. It is the oil companies which need to deal with the problems. I bitterly regret that UKOOA and the Offshore Contractors Council did not feel able to join in a discussion, which had no higher objective than to get people into the same room to discuss this crucial issue.

With the removal of the blacklist, and the possible offer of talks with the trade unions, there is room for progress. I listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Ryedale said. Before the Piper Alpha tragedy it was unlikely that we would have heard a Conservative Member make the contribution which he made, or the interventions by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin).

The worries about safety go across party divides and the divides within the industry. It is incombent on everyone in the industry to deal with the problem and to break down the barriers. That is a message to both sides —the trade unions and the industry—to get together and talk.

In the discussions that I had with the Minister since he took office, I have been impressed by the serious way in which he has dealt with the issues, and how he has already begun to deal with the niggling problems that have beset us. For example, the hon. Member for Ryedale mentioned the need for inspectors to be able to get on to helicopters at short notice and carry out snap inspections. Labour Members have argued for that for a long time, without success, and I was pleased to read recently that the Minister had issued instructions for it to happen.

Such difficulties can be resolved if we address them with an open mind. Lord Cullen has enabled us to do so, and I hope that we can now make progress.

10.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Colin Moynihan): Let me begin by replying to a point made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran) about the conference and the response to it of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association. As he knows, I too was sad that a full house was not possible on that occasion. I note that the conference has been postponed: let me say through the hon. Gentleman—given his involvement with the organisers—that I very much hope that this is a postponement and not a cancellation, and that it can be reconvened shortly. I hope that UKOOA will respond positively; certainly I shall, if diaries and the business of the House permit it.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). We have had occasion to differ on a number of sporting issues in recent years, but I agreed with everything that he said in his speech tonight, which was sensitive and clearly the result of a good deal of detailed analysis and preparation. It was helpful of him to give us our first opportunity to debate the Cullen report in detail.

My hon. Friend rightly paid tribute to all who work in the offshore oil and gas industry. Let me echo those admirable sentiments: I entirely share the esteem in which he holds those people, who often work in very difficult conditions. Let me also place on record my support and respect for our inspectorate, which is composed of men of the highest calibre.

I am glad that mention has been made of Tony Barrell, who has transferred from the Health and Safety Executive. I welcome that move: Tony Barrell has shown tremendous dedication and enthusiasm since the first day. I have had so many meetings with him although he has been in post for only just over a week—that I cannot recall them all in numerical terms, but I can report that he has great expertise, and is willing to learn a good deal about the offshore industry and to steer his team into the 1990s. I know that he will respond positively to any advice and suggestions from hon. Members, whatever their political persuasion. He will proceed with an inspectorate that is professional, well qualified, committed and energetic in the pursuit of safety and excellence.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin)—I am sorry that he is not present; I never like criticising hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, when they are not present to hear that criticism, but he was here for only a short time—will pause to reflect. I deeply regretted his innuendo about criticism of the inspectorate. Certainly Lord Cullen criticised the system in which it was operating, but he never suggested that that same inspectorate should not form the core of the new inspectorate which will look into the safety problems confronting the offshore industry in the 1990s. I wish its members well: they have been under the glare of publicity in recent months, and they deserve our full support.

I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House are at one about the importance of what my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South called surprise visits. Although the inspectorate undertakes many surprise visits, it is always difficult, because places have to be booked on helicopters.

We cannot just walk in, as we do onshore. A classic example of that occurred last weekend. At very short notice, two of my inspectors went out to Cormorant Alpha and Brent Charlie to assess a number of concerns about topside valves and derogation. They went out with me on a number of recent visits, again at short notice and on one occasion with only a day's notice. I fully support spot visits; they are important. However, I can give an undertaking that they are already very much in place.

I echo what was said by my hon. Friend about the need for a balance to be struck between prescription and operator responsibility for safety management. It will always be a subject for debate, but I agree that Lord Cullen addressed the point sensitively. The operator must be responsible for safety on every platform. That is critical to future safety inspections. An effective audit system to be set up by each operator is equally important. The inspectorate will assess the type of assessment that will be required for safety management. That was not their prime responsibility under the old system.

I can give an undertaking to my hon. Friend that prompt and effective implementation of Lord Cullen's recommendations remain a priority for my Department. I give an undertaking to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South that we shall devote all our energies to ensuring that adequate resources are provided. It has often been difficult to emply as many inspectors as we wanted to employ, despite a 23 per cent. increase in pay this year for inspectors. It is often difficult to persuade qualified men at the top of their profession to work for the inspectorate, not least when some of the operators seek diligently to employ the same people. We must ensure that the inspectorate is both well staffed and well paid.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for providing us with an early opportunity to debate Lord Cullen's report. The praise that has been accorded to it is fully merited. It is a most impressive report. Apart from being painstaking, thorough and conscientious, it is also a most penetrating report. As someone who approaches the subject without specialised knowledge, it seems to me little short of astonishing that so much can be deduced about what happened in the disaster in the absence of nearly all the physical evidence and despite the loss of the personal testimony of so many of those who were there. Lord Cullen marshalled the evidence in a masterly fashion. His conclusions demand corresponding respect.

The report is no less impressive in its shaping of recommendations for the future, a fact that is reflected in its immediate and unqualified acceptance by the Government. Before I deal with a number of specific points that have arisen in the debate, may I deal with my hon. Friend's reference to the Government's consistency of approach towards offshore safety?

Shortly after the Conservative administration came to power 11 years ago, they received the report of a committee set up by the previous Labour Government. It was the first independent review of offshore safety since the tribunal of inquiry into the Sea Gem disaster in 1968. The principal recommendation of the majority of the committee's members was that responsibility for the regulation of offshore safety should be unified in the hands of the Department of Energy. The trade union representatives on the committee, however, disagreed, and recorded their preference for that responsibility to be given to the Health and Safety Executive.

The Government moved promptly and respnded to the main recommendation. After careful consideration, the action taken, as explained by the then Minister of State, took account of some of the concerns expressed by the

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trade union members in their note of dissent. They had expressed concern that the Health and Safety Commission should not lose its involvement in offshore safety. The solution that was adopted enlarged the commission's involvement. It was enabled to advise the Secretary of State on all his responsibilities for offshore safety. The Government therefore acted promptly, taking full account of the independent advice that was given and, as far as practicable, of other concerns that were raised. Ten years later, we have once again received independent advice on the organisation of safety. Our response has been as prompt and comprehensive as on the earlier occasion.

However, the Government did not wait for the result of the inquiry before taking action. We moved swiftly to ensure that any early lessons that could be drawn from the destruction of Piper Alpha were disseminated as soon as possible. Even before the Department's technical investigation into the cause of the accident was completed, its director of safety wrote to all offshore operators pointing out the safety significance of emergency shut-down valves on oil and gas pipelines and asking for an immediate review by operators of their existing pipelines.

When the technical investigation was complete, the director of safety again wrote to all offshore operators asking them to pay particular attention to several other areas of operator safety systems and procedures when evaluating the technical report. Now that Lord Cullen's report has been published, the Government have wasted no time in putting in hand the necessary arrangements to implement its recommendations.

On the day that the report was published, the Department's director of safety wrote once again to the industry asking it to undertake, without delay, the necessary action to implement those of Lord Cullen's recommendations that were capable of being implemented immediately. The Government are working urgently to progress the detailed work required to implement the rest of the recommendations.

I should like to enlarge a little on the information I gave earlier in an intervention on emergency shut-down valves. I am pleased to say that operators have, in general, made good progress and to date, as I said, more than 134 valves have been successfully fitted. I expect a number of others to be completed by the end of the year—for example, on the far north liquids and gas gathering system—FLAG. It is likely to be January before that system comes back on because of gassing up the system, which is a technical and lengthy procedure. We have urged that work should be done on the fitting of those valves.

I have received a number of applications for temporary exemptions to the regulations to allow a longer period for the necessary work to be completed. These applications have been rigorously scrutinised by my inspectors, and in 25 cases I have agreed to temporary exemptions for the minimum time necessary, subject to additional safety restrictions to maintain acceptably safe operations during the period.

In some cases, I believe that work can safely continue during winter conditions, and the extension is for periods of three to six weeks only. In other cases, I support the view of my inspectors that work involving, for example, over-side working cannot safely be done in winter conditions. Where my inspectors have accepted this point as relevant, I have agreed to exemptions of up to three months. In no case have I agreed to an exemption exceeding three months.

I then had to decide whether operations should accordingly cease on 31 December, and the whole Brent system be shut down. Unless a mode of operation could be devised that was at least as safe as that required by the regulations, shut-down would have been the only course. I am glad to tell the House and those who will continue to be in employment in the next three months—the men on the platforms concerned—that my inspectors have established with the company that there is a mode of operation which meets this stringent safety standard. It involves, in particular, operating the system in what is known as dead crude mode—that is, that the natural gas liquids that are normally carried through the system will not be carried.

With the other conditions imposed, that means that operations of the system after 31 December will be at least as safe as they would have been had the valve work been fully completed. Indeed, in some cases it will be more so.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), through the columns of the *New Scientist*, of which I have become an assiduous reader in recent months, kindly paid tribute to the detail and analysis of the Department on safety and, if I recall rightly, on the emergency shut-down valves and the action to be taken to enhance safety. In the past week, an enormous amount has been put in by my inspectors and me. When I was not happy with the proposals they submitted, I asked them to discuss again with Shell at great length, and with particular reference to the Brent system, the new, tough and expensive conditions for the operators. Those conditions must be implemented if a derogation from the regulations passed by the House is to be given.

Five conditions must be met. First, the pipeline shall not be operated unless the true vapour pressure exerted by the substances within the pipeline is less than 2·07 bar absolute. Measurements shall be taken of the substances in the pipeline at intervals, no longer than 24 hours apart, and the measurements shall demonstrate that the TVP of the substances is below the pressure stated—the dead crude mode.

Secondly, the pipeline shall not be operated unless the pressure is less than that percentage of the pipeline maximum allowable operating pressure as declared in accordance with regulation 6(3)(a) of the Submarine Pipelines Safety Regulations (SI 1982) No. 1513. To the layman, that means that the pipelines shall be operated at reduced pressures. The reduced acceptable operating pressure should be at least 15 per cent. and in some cases up to 55 per cent. That will have a significant impact on the balance sheet of the operators. Although every pipeline has a maximum allowable operating pressure, the pipelines should not be operated unless those pressures are less than the percentage of the pipeline operating pressure as declared in accordance with the regulations.

The third condition is that apparatus or equipment for the testing, inspecting or maintaining of the pipeline shall not be introduced or recovered from the pipeline, unless such introduction or recovery is essential to maintain the safe operation of the pipeline. We are talking, in other words, about pigging. The problem with pigging is that

there is a potential safety hazard in the opening and closing of pipelines and pressure valves. That is why it is important to apply this condition.

Fourthly, work involving the use of naked flames, or the generation of sparks shall not be carried out in the vicinity of the pipeline between the existing emergency shut-down valve and the proposed new location of the ESD valve unless that work is essential to maintain or enhance the safety of the installation to which the pipeline is connected. There are clear restrictions on hot works.

The fifth condition ensures that the pipeline shall not be operated unless the pipeline between the existing ESD valve and the proposed new location of the ESD valve is visually inspected at intervals, no longer than three hours apart, for signs of leakage or damage and for any activities which might present a hazard to the pipeline.

Initially, I was in favour of a shorter interval between inspections, but if there was a visual inspection every hour, it would take the best part of half an hour to get down from one of the large platforms to undertake that inspection. We believe that the three-hour provision—albeit a rigorous condition to be placed on the operators—is the shortest time interval between such visual inspections.

Mr. Doran: We know that the Brent system has had serious problems. I recollect that the expected production from the system was about 200,000 barrels a day. That production level has not been achieved since at least May 1989. The last time I checked, current production was around 1,700 barrels a day. Does Shell anticipate any increase in that production or is that the production level on which the exemption was given?

Mr. Moynihan: I do not have the precise figures for the expected production from all the various platforms in the North sea. If memory serves me a right, there is no anticipated increase in production. However, the reduced levels of production were largely due to maintenance work and down-time work required for safety purposes. Those factors represent a spike on the production graphs, but I shall happily give the hon. Gentleman the proposed production profile for that system.

I have agreed to exemptions only where the operator has satisfied me that he has made all appropriate plans and all necessary efforts to achieve the 31 December deadline and that his inability to achieve it is due to factors beyond his control. In various cases, for example, they include the failure of suppliers to meet deadlines. But where, on the basis of information supplied, I am not satisfied that the conditions have been met. I have refused to grant an exemption. I must report to the House that there are four such cases. There are three valves on the Texaco Tartan platform and a valve on the Beryl Alpha platform operated by Mobil. That is on the basis of information that I have received to date.

I inform the House—in response to an intervention by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South—that the reason why we have come to the House with details at this stage is that we feel that it is right and proper that the House should be informed. However, we emphasise that it was the decision of the House that the exemptions could be applied for until 31 December. Effectively, what I have given the hon. Gentleman is a full progress report. It would be technically possible—although we do not anticipate it—for an operator to come forward with further proposals up to the 31 December deadline, as agreed in the regulations. It is possible, for example, that we might receive further information from Texaco. That is why I emphasise that my position tonight is based on information that I have received.

Mr. Doran: What would be the implications if permission for the four valves were refused? Would all operations on the platforms be shut down?

Mr. Moynihan: That is absolutely right. The operations on those platforms will be shut down until that work is undertaken. Equally, for the 18 valves on which work needs to be done—eight on the FLAG system, two on Morecambe, two on Sun Oil on Balmoral, four Shell gas valves on the FLAG system, and two further Morecambe gas valves we have said that production cannot start on any of the platforms until the valves are in place. I hope that the hon. Gentleman realises that that is a tough programme and a tough response by Government to make operators give top priority to safety. It will cost the operators money, but we believe that that money needs to be spent because safety must be first and foremost in the minds of the public, workers in the North sea and—as the hon. Gentleman said from a sedentary position—of everyone involved.

I have not had the opportunity to go as far as I would like on safety, but I shall pick up some of the points made in the last three minutes of the debate. The Government have accepted Lord Cullen's recommendation that sub-sea isolation systems need to be assessed on an individual basis as part of the safety case for each installation. We accept the argument that that need should be assessed in the light of the overall risk assessment, and we accept Lord Cullen's conclusions on that matter.

The regulations for the safety cases will, of course, be brought forward with all proper speed. Until responsibility is moved to the Health and Safety Executive, it lies firmly with the Department of Energy. We shall continue to have ministerial responsibility for offshore safety. An announcement will be made as soon as possible about the date and nature of the move.

Again, I give an undertaking to the House that we shall not hold back in making the change, but it is right and proper that discussions progress between the safety division and the HSE to ensure that a swift and effective move is made without undue haste. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said, the decision to make the move was taken on balance by Lord Cullen. The move should not reduce the importance of placing safety first and giving it proper consideration. We must assess often detailed divisions of responsibility between my Department and the safety officers who to date have worked within my Department.

Again I welcome the announcement made by Shell. To echo the point made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South, we welcome Shell's announcement in the past 48 hours that it intends to lift the bar on approximately 500 contract workers who sat in during the offshore dispute last summer and refused to go ashore when asked to do so by their offshore installation managers during the dispute. I also welcome the fact that Shell has announced plans to protect safety representatives from victimisation. In future, any matter involving an alleged breach of discipline on the part of a safety representative will be dealt with by senior Shell onshore management.

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I hope that, in considering these matters, the House will continue to recognise that Lord Cullen's report should be seen not as the closing of a chapter but rather as the beginning of a new approach which will place safety on a far better footing in every installation in the North Sea. We understand the strength of feeling that lies behind many of the concerns that hon. Members have voiced. We are convinced that prompt, comprehensive and effective implementation of Lord Cullen's report will represent real progress towards meeting those concerns and towards showing that they have been met. The Government are committed to securing prompt, comprehensive and effective implementation.

The Gulf

11.10 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I have the impression that, so horrendous is the prospect of a protracted or, indeed, any war in the Gulf, the House of Commons has anaesthetised its collective mind about it.

I am one of a dwindling number of hon. Members who have been here since the time of Harold Macmillan, but I have never been more uptight about any issue than I am about a Gulf war—in particular, the ecological consequences of the military option, which are the subject of this debate.

I am plain frightened for my country and for millions in the Arab world and the so-called third world.

I am more concerned about this matter than I have been about anything in my life. The issue could be the survival of humanity. I am not given to flights of fancy or to exaggeration. As the Minister answering the previous debate said, for 24 years, I have been a weekly columnist for *New Scientist*.

I think that we are in danger, to use the title of John Tusa's programme, of sleepwalking to war. Some extremely alert and effective Members of this House seem to be under the impression that what would happen would be a glorified pub brawl. I fear that the reality would be very different; it could be Passchendaele in the sands.

For 21 months, I wore the emblem of the Desert Rats. I was tank crew. My heart goes out to those who, 40 years later, are tank crew in what used to be the Scots Greys —now the Scots Dragoon Guards—and the other armoured regiments, who are having to deal not only with the sand but with the dust of the desert and what that can do to the instrumentation of tanks.

A number of hon. Members have talked about "liberating Kuwait". I am not sure that it would not be more accurate to say that the option is not liberating Kuwait but "obliterating Kuwait." Any land military attempt to "free" Kuwait could result in the kind of fighting that was experienced at Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands or at Iwo Jima. Iraq's would be a battle-hardened army. The present crisis is totally different from the Falklands and the Argentine conscripts. We are talking about people who have been through a decade of extremely tough war.

I shall be personal for a moment in a way that I am not normally personal, least of all about myself. I was brought up as young child by a grandmother who was broken, and broken-hearted, because my grandfather was one of those lucky enough to come back from Gallipoli, but was never the same again. My grandmother and grandfather made Edward Grey, Asquith's Foreign Secretary, my mother's godfather, so I have been interested in his books. We could be lurching into another war such as the first world war, and I have been re-reading the diaries of Grey who, reflecting on the first world war, said:

"Let us examine the first of our considerations as dominant in my mind in the last week of July 1914. This was that a great European war would be a catastrophe on an unprecedented scale, and that this would be so obvious to all the Great Powers that when on an edge of the abyss they would call a halt and recoil from it."

He continued:

"The first half of this impression unfortunately admits of no qualification now. We know the full tale of the loss of life, of the maiming and wounding, but the amount of grief and suffering caused by it is more than human thought or sympathy can measure."

I hope that I may be forgiven for saying that both my mother and my father were Arabic speakers and I was brought up to respect the Semite people, Arab and Jew. I have the feeling that threats and refusing to talk simply will not work with those people. I am distressed at what I can only refer to as a certain kind of Anglo-Saxon self-righteousness.

When I was a young Member of Parliament in January 1964, my wife and I were in Cairo. On our last night there, at his request, I received a message to go and see President Nasser in his private house on the outskirts of Cairo. The hour and a half that he gave me made a lifelong indelible impression on me about the aspirations of the Arab peoples.

I draw from such an experience the view that, if we try to humiliate the Iraqis, whatever we may think, there will simply be a bitter war. I think that the troops on the ground understand that, and I should like to pay tribute to Brigadier Patrick Cordingley. It must have taken courage, and I thought that he was quite ritght, to speak out as he did about possible losses. Some people may think that a field commander should not do that, but in these circumstances he was justified in bringing the possible casualties to the attention of people here.

If my hon. Friend—hon. Friend in more senses than one—the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) thinks that I am a bit way out, I call in aid Sir Brian Urquhart of the United Nations, in particular his Montagu Burton lecture to the university of Edinburgh. He said:

"The idea of Saddam Hussein as the righteous champion of the underprivileged of the world . . . is particularly hard to take, but it is a distinct possibility. One must understand the extreme frustration and hopelessness of some parts of the world . . . which could be channelled easily by someone clever. This is Saddam's Robin Hood act, but it is getting quite a lot of takers in the Middle East."

Sir Brian should be listened to.

Having worked itself up to an impressive pitch of martial readiness in the Gulf, the United States may think it needs to achieve every one of its stated aims in full, or be regarded as having failed. Some Americans think that the United States remains a great power only if it deals once and for all with Saddam Hussein. That is a dangerous attitude. Perhaps as politicians we must understand the possible difficulties of loss of face by the President of the United States, but I beg Ministers and some of my colleagues to realise that loss of face is as nothing compared with the alternative of war. That is why I have concentrated on the ecological aspects, although the Minister may not think them important.

Saddam Hussein has the ace of trumps and a good deal more. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and others have told us—it is almost certainly established fact—that Hussein has deep-mined at least 300 of the Kuwaiti oil wells. Even if only 30 were ignited, accepted safety standards would go for the proverbial burton. The effects would linger in the atmosphere. I told the Foreign Office—no doubt it suspected that I would do this—that I intended to quote yet again what the King of Jordan said in his speech on global warming:

"The preliminary calculations of our scientists indicate that if half Kuwait's oil reserves (or about 50 billion barrels) were to go up in flames during a war, the environmental impact would be swift, severe and devastating. Emissions of carbon

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monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide would surpass internationally accepted safety standards by factors of hundreds, and, without factoring in wind effects, would blacken the skies over a radius of at least 750 km from Kuwait —that is, all of Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, the Emirates and the waters of the Gulf, and most of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Iran. Other than poisonous emissions of carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide the emission of carbon dioxide will increase by at least a factor of 100 over the current total global emission of 5·5 billion tonnes per year. Lingering in the atmosphere for around a hundred years, this massive carbon dioxide emission would promote the green house effect and contribute to global warming, climatic changes, lower global food production and human and animal health deterioration. The environmental and human toll of such a scenario would be beyond our wildest fears. If oil production facilities suffered long-term damage, which is likely in the event of war, the catastrophe, we warn warn of, would be compounded by the devastating impact of the loss of oil imports for economies and peoples around the world."

The House will have to bear with me while I go over the subsequent parliamentary exchanges. In arguing such a case, I must be extremely careful about ministerial answers and I do not want to truncate them because if I did so I would be accused of distortion. It is certainly no part of my case to distort what Ministers have said. On 13 November, I tabled Question 2 to the Prime Minister. It reads:

"**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the discussions in Geneva with King Hussein of Jordan in relation to the ecological consequences of war in the middle east."

The Prime Minister at that time, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), replied:

"My bilateral discussions with King Hussein did not cover this subject, as I made clear to the hon. Gentleman on 7 November. However, if a tyrant is never to be fought in order that freedomn and justice may be restored, tyranny will triumph with all its brutality and the environment of human rights, which we seek to extend, will have received a fatal blow."

I then asked a supplementary question and said:

"If King Hussein is right and 50,000 million barrels of oil equivalent go up in flames, what will be the result in terms of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide, and what would that do to people and the planet?"

The then Prime Minister replied:

"If the hon. Gentleman wishes to avert such a tragedy, there is one method which would do it easily—that is for Saddam Hussein to withdraw totally from Kuwait and for a legitimate Government to be restored. I do not necessarily accept King Hussein's figures—mine are a little different—but that is not the main point. Saddam Hussein's withdrawal would not put right a wrong because of the brutality that has been perpetrated in his name, but that is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question."—[*Official Report*, 13 November 1990; Vol. 180, c. 446.]

I fear that that is not the answer to my question, because it does not deal with the king's statement, awkward and unpleasant though that statement may be. I happen to know that that statement was carefully put forward by the king's not inconsiderable science institute in Amman, which received a good deal of technical help from elsewhere.

On 11 December I was lucky enough to have Question 1 to the new Prime Minister. It reads:

"**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) of 13 November, *Official Report*, column 446, if he will specify those figures which he possesses relating to oil stocks, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide which differ from those given by King Hussein, showing in each case the comparable figures and the source for those which he uses."

The Prime Minister replied:

"No, Sir. The calculations rest on assumptions about the consequences of a conflict in the Gulf which, by their nature, are not quantifiable. The best way to avoid any adverse consequences is for Saddam Hussein to comply with the United Nations resolutions in full."

The assertions may not be exactly quantifiable, but simply to say that they are not quantifiable will not do.

I asked the following supplementary:

"Is not the spine-chilling truth that no mining engineer, no scientist and no politician knows for certain what will occur if 300 deep-mined oil wells are detonated? In those circumstances, might not the fires rage for months, if not years, in a fashion quite outside human experience? In view of that, should not the damage to the planet, let alone the human slaughter and the Arab ecological disaster, rule out any talk of a military option?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"As the hon. Gentleman says, no one can be absolutely and precisely certain about the outcome. Insofar as it is possible to make an assessment, we see no reason to agree with any of the views put forward thus far as to what the outcome might be."

This is not adequate, because in my original question I had asked about the figures

"relating to oil stocks, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide which differ from those given by King Hussein, showing in each case the comparable figures and the source for those which he uses."

The Prime Minister might have been a bit more forthcoming about his sources.

After my question, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), a parliamentary colleague whom I respect greatly, also asked a question:

"Is my right hon. Friend aware that last week I visited the Council for Higher Education in Amman, where the calculations were carried out for King Hussein? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the horrors of war, whether human or environmental, should be made abundantly plain to Saddam Hussein in particular?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about that, but on the assumptions that King Hussein used, we believe that some of the difficulties to which he referred would not be precisely as described."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 814.]

The Government must be far more forthcoming. I can understand the Prime Minister not going further, given the nature of Prime Minister's Question Time, and his crisp answering, but tonight the Minister has an opportunity to tell us a bit about the sources, and why he does not accept the King of Jordan's figures.

My sources tell a different story. For example, there is Dave Matthews, who is a full-time officer of the Fire Brigades Union. When I made inquiries of him, he asked me whether I remembered the fire at Thorne colliery, in Yorkshire. As you come from near Doncaster, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may know a good deal about this. It may be within your recollection that the British fire brigade, probably the most efficient in Europe, had to call in the Red Adair team to do something about that fire. As my friends in the Fire Brigades Union said, if they had to do that for what was a comparatively minor fire, who will put out a massive conflagration in Kuwait? That is a good question.

I then went, naturally, to BP, which has known me for a quarter of a century as I represent many of those who work at Grangemouth. I have had excellent relations with the company and it did me the courtesy of sending me a representative at the most senior level. He is a managing director who had been general manager in Kuwait, and was in charge, as an engineer, of the most awkward fire in

the middle east in the 1970s. He told me that the Red Adair team was not the only one of its type and that there were various ways of extinguishing fires, including the blowing-up method. He said, "Yes, we could cope; but with how many fires would we have to cope at the same time?" I am open to contradiction, but has there been a time when there have been more than two major oil fires raging at the same time? It is extremely difficult to dampen down and extinguish such fires. It would be even more difficult if, dare I say it, a military conflict were taking place on top of an oilfield.

Shell went to great trouble. It consulted the expertise that was available to it, both in this country and in the Netherlands, and said that the general view was, "We simply do not know." No one in the world before has ever detonated oil wells on purpose.

Furthermore, there is the problem of fire fighting in the waters of the Gulf. Much of the previous debate was about the Piper Alpha disaster. What would happen in the shallow waters of the Gulf, where fire is more uncontrollable than in the North sea, if there were to be a major Iraqi effort to set the Gulf ablaze? I am told that that would be only too likely to happen. Some of us remember the Torrey Canyon and all the difficulties that ensued as a result of that episode. The scale of that disaster might be multiplied.

Do not let us imagine that Saddam Hussain would not do it. He has shown before that he is capable of bringing the temple down with him. That may not be the basis of what we call western rationality, but on that basis we might not be having this debate nor facing the circumstances that have led to its taking place. I quote *Al-Jumhouriya* of 8 November. It stated that Iraq threatened to turn the Arabian peninsula into ashes and the Saudi oilfields into a sea of fire if it was attacked. It said:

"The mother of all battles is nearer today."

It commented that only Medina and Mecca would be spared and added:

"If the fire of aggression is unleashed against Iraq, flames will burn in every direction."

Apparently the Iraqis have sets of sealed orders in case of war.

I do not think that there is much doubt that the Iraqis could do it and would do it. Their history shows that they have not made claims of that sort that they could not put into effect. What are the Government doing to find out?

On 29 November, I asked the Prime Minister

"if he will discuss the ecological consequences of a military option in the Gulf with President Bush."

The Prime Minister replied:

"I have no plans to do so."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1990; Vol. 181, c. *466*.]

After August, September, October and November, surely the Government should have made some effort to establish a rather more detailed view of the scenario that I and others—others with real expert qualifications—have been painting.

On 16 November, I asked the Foreign Secretary whether

"the United Nations has any plans to assess the safety and security implications for the oilfields in the Gulf area of possible conflagration."

The Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), replied:

"We are not aware of any United Nations plans to carry out such an assessment. For our part, we are fully aware that hostilities in the Gulf would have serious consequences of many kinds. Hence our determination to bring maximum pressure to bear on Saddam Hussein to comply with the Security Council resolutions in order to resolve the crisis."—[*Official Report*, 16 November 1990; Vol. 180, c. *261*.]

I think that the Government might show a little more curiosity. Even if 30 of the 300 oil wells in Kuwait deep mined by Iraq were ignited after detonation, the emissions of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide would pass internationally accepted safety standards by a factor of hundreds. The skies would be blackened all over Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, the Emirates, the waters of the Gulf, and over most of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Iran.

For the past 24 years, I have been a weekly columnist for the *New Scientist*. Successive editors of that journal would not have countenanced me if I had been given to making fanciful judgments. The truth is that no scientist from a British university, no mining engineer from an oil company, no expert in any professional capacity from the Fire Brigades Union or any of the firms that are involved in fire fighting—Red Adair would not comment to the Library of the House of Commons when he was asked—let alone any politician, could tell what would happen if 300 oil wells were detonated. As has been pointed out, at the very least it would mean that oil would be $120 a barrel in Rotterdam.

War is a disproportionate response to the original outrage of invading Kuwait. We must consider the economic consequences. On 10 December, I asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer

"what assessment he has made of the economic consequences of a military option in the Gulf."

The Chief Secretary replied:

"The Government's firm objective is to resolve the Gulf crisis by peaceful means on the basis of full implementation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council. To achieve this, it is essential to establish a credible military option, so that Saddam Hussein is left in no doubt that he is facing a military force which could compel him to leave Kuwait. My right hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) drew attention in his autumn statement to uncertainties in the economic outlook generated by the Gulf crisis."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. *258*.]

It may be that the Government cannot answer the question; the fact is that they have not.

When we talk about the effect on Saudi Arabia, we must comment that military experts do not know how Scud missiles targeted on Saudi targets would be deflected. I am not surprised that tonight we heard that General Calvin Waller, the United States commander, said that he was not ready. The truth is that they are finding it more and more difficult. We delude ourselves if we imagine that we can predict that such wars will be brief, limited to surgical attacks, with relatively light casualties and with predictable consequences for the politics and economies of the countries involved.

The difficulty is something else. If there is not a relatively quick victory, we have to turn to the question that I put to General Colin Powell when he came a fortnight ago to Committee Room 14. It will be within the recollection of some 70 of my colleagues there, mostly Conservative Members, that I asked two questions. The second was whether General Powell contemplated the use of nuclear weapons. I prefaced that by saying that I was one of the minority of Members of Parliament who thought that there was no successful military solution to be had, but that I respected General Powell's sincerity about preferring the peace option to war.

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Within the hearing of many of my colleagues, General Powell said that he did not contemplate the use of nuclear weapons, but he added that he could not rule out any advice that he might give in certain circumstances to the President of the United States. I believe that everybody in that room realised that in certain tragic circumstances the nuclear option was a possibility. The mind boggles at not only, for heaven's sake, the ecological effect, but the human effect and the effect on relations with the Arab world for decades, and possibly longer, to come.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): I do not want to distract my hon. Friend from his line of thought, but would it not be appropriate at this point to remember that only a few short years ago the partial explosion of one nuclear power station at Chernobyl had serious long-term consequences in Wales and in Scotland and that one accident in Bhopal had long-term consequences for the lives and livelihoods of thousands of people in India? If the effect of the destruction of a number of oil wells was added to the effects of biological, chemical and nuclear warfare, the region that would be affected would be massive and the number affected would run into millions.

Mr. Dalyell: I am genuinely grateful to my hon. Friend. That is an important part of the argument. It is a serious point, succinctly and well put, and I would like to add it to the argument.

Admiral William Crowe, the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, expressed the following view:

"If deposing Saddam Hussein would sort out the Middle East and permit the US to turn its attention elsewhere and to concentrate on our very pressing domestic problems, the case for initiating offensive action immediately would be considerably strengthened. But the Middle East is not that simple. I witnessed it at first hand; I lived in the Middle East for a year.

I would submit that posturing ourselves to promote stability for the long-term is our primary national interest in the Middle East. It is not obvious to me that we are currently looking at the crisis in this light. Our dislike for Saddam seems to have crowded out many other considerations. In working through the problems myself, I am persuaded that the US initiating hostilities could well exacerbate many of the tensions I have cited, and perhaps further polarise the Arab world. Certainly, many Arabs would deeply resent a campaign which would necessarily kill large numbers of their Muslim brothers and force them to choose sides between Arab nations and the west . . .

"We may be, in a certain sense, on the horns of a no-win dilemma. Even if we win, we lose ground in the Arab world and generally injure our ability to deal in the future with the labyrinth of the Middle East.

I firmly believe that Saddam must be pushed out of Kuwait; he must leave Kuwait. At the same time, given the larger context, I judge it highly desirable to achieve this goal in a peaceful fashion, if that is possible. In other words, I would argue that we should give sanctions a fair chance before we discard them."

Some of my hon. Friends might ask, "What about the United Nations?" I was fortunate enough to be chosen by Mr. Speaker to lead the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation to Zaire. It was a truncated visit because we were recalled for the vote of confidence debate. However, we saw the country's Foreign Minister, who had just held a long meeting with James Baker. We naturally asked him about it.

I do not think that I am distorting matters in any way when I say that it was clear that Zaire lined up with the Americans not because of a judgment on the middle east, but because it wanted the lifting of the ban on American aid to Zaire that had been imposed because of that country's human rights violations—an issue totally separate from the merits or demerits of going along with the American position in relation to the United Nations.

Some of us fear that, if there is a conflict, it will be goodbye to King Hussein and the Hashemites, and that it may well be farewell to President Mubarak. Heaven knows what would be the reaction in Tunisia and Algeria. There is considerable hearsay that the Tunisians are providing credits to the Iraqis so that they can circumvent the embargo. I ask for that strong rumour to be investigated. I cannot claim it as fact, but perhaps someone could comment at a convenient point on whether there is any evidence of that happening.

I might be asked what I think the Labour party should do. I am very influenced by my most senior parliamentary colleagues. One was a beachmaster at Anzio, and another is a former Prime Minister with a distinguished war record; and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) served bravely in the RAF during the second world war. They have all taken a rather distinctive line. I would like my party to follow the idea of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), and ask my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) to pay an official visit to Baghdad on behalf of my party.

The alternatives are horrific. I did national service at a time when many of my contemporaries at Catterick went with the 8th Hussars and other units to Korea. A lot of them were shot up. The tanks did not work properly, and the soldiers who had to get out of their tanks to do something about equipment that had gone wrong became the proverbial sitting ducks.

I draw attention also to the hospital aspect, in the event that the worst happens. This afternoon, I asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he would make a statement on the provision made in Scottish hospitals for the reception of service casualties in the event of the use of the military option in the Gulf. The Under-Secretary replied:

"Plans which provide for the treatment of military casualties in Scottish hospitals in the event of war have been reviewed. If required, beds would be made available in NHS hospitals in Scotland to treat service casualties arising from possible hostilities in the Gulf."

It so happens that there used to be a distinguished burns unit at Bangour hospital, in my constituency. The shortages of skills to cope with burns and similar injuries are a national problem—I will not say a national "crisis". I am not casting blame, but saying that there is a real problem, which is encapsulated by an article in *The Universe*, the Catholic newspaper, of 16 December 1990 entitled "Wife's horror at Gulf graves plan".

It says:

"A plot of land has already been allocated to bury victims of the Gulf war by the War Graves Commission, claims the wife of an Army officer serving in Saudi Arabia.

The Catholic woman, who didn't wish to be named, is based in Germany and keeps in touch with her husband by mail and forces' radio and television.

She said: 'The most sickening thing my husband told me was that men from the War Graves Commission have been out to Saudi Arabia. They have already measured and acquired a plot of land in preparation for any war dead.

Last week saw the first suicide in the Gulf. A medic shot himself on hearing that his wife had left him.'

She said Army officials had warned wives not to believe all they heard or saw on television, radio or in the newspapers and that they would be kept reliably informed through military sources.

The woman, mother of two young children, said that according to British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS), the soldiers are not allowed even to mention the word 'Christmas' in Saudi Arabia."

That appeared in print. I do not know whether it is true. However, I gave the Foreign Office notice that I should like it to comment on whether the War Graves Commission has been out there or not.

It is not only a question of British service men. We ought to remember that many Iraqi women and children would certainly be killed in any action. Some people say that they believe that they would be dying for a heroic cause, and refer to Iraqi mothers who believe that their sons will be next to Allah, which is the reward for martyrdom.

When the Iraqi people are attacked, they will react as the citizens of London did in 1940, or like the citizens of Hamburg in 1943. Production in German cities increased after bombing because that is the effect that bomb attacks have on populations.

I believe that we should let sanctions run for a long time. A powerful television programme, produced by George Carey, called the "Case for Peace", showed convincingly that if sanctions ran for at least another year the Iraqi forces would be at least 30 per cent. less effective.

Also, we ought to have an explanation as to why the British—apparently—led the pack of EEC Ministers against the wishes of the Germans and the Italians by cancelling the meeting that was to have taken place with Tariq Aziz in Rome. Unless we talk we shall get nowhere, and we deserve an explanation why we took the initiative against the wishes of two of our major European partners.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I have listened with interest to the case that the hon. Gentleman is making. Indeed, I have a particular interest, as both my father and my grandfather—coincidentally—were wounded fighting in the middle east, my grandfather severely so in Mesopotamia.

The hon. Gentleman has made his point clearly and with great integrity. May I remind him, however, that just over half a century ago these Benches were full of people who had fought in the first world war, and who took the view that the diplomatic solutions that he is talking about now must be tried and pursued at all costs rather than another war taking place? It was because we went on and on—through the abandoning of Czechoslovakia, the Munich crisis and so forth—failing to grasp the nettle that we finally allowed Hitler to become so strong that we very nearly lost the war.

In a year or two, Saddam Hussein may have the very nuclear weapons that the hon. Gentleman so dreads. Surely the worst option of all would be to back away and allow diplomatic talks to go on and on, allowing Saddam Hussein to become more powerful, and to delay action until he has the next move.

Mr. Dalyell: That is certainly a respectable point of view. I can only say, in shorthand—because I am trying the patience of the House with my long speech—that I do not accept the 1939 analogy, and I certainly do not accept any comparison with, for instance, the heroic work of the 8th Army against Rommel. The weapons available now—leaving aside nuclear weapons—are such that the consequences would be entirely different.

Let me put another argument to the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier). Let us suppose that there was a military victory. What then? We are faced, are we not, with a sullen, resentful and vengeful Arab population, and it would be an Anglo-American army that would be holding them down. It is highly significant that 10 of our partners have not sent any troops to the middle east. Like it or not, this is seen to be becoming more and more an Anglo-American situation.

Let us suppose that blood was spilt. Would King Hussein remain in Jordan? Would President Mubarak retain power in Egypt? What would happen in Syria is anyone's guess.

Mr. Brazier: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have a particular interest in that part of the world; indeed, I was in the Lebanon in February. The truth is that the boot is on the other foot. If we back away from this, the star of Saddam Hussein will rise still further, and the positions of the very gentlemen whom he has mentioned—certainly that of President Mubarak; I am not especially concerned about President Assad—will be strongly threatened. Mubarak will be seen to have backed the losing side, and his position will be extremely weak.

Mr. Dalyell: What I might describe as a martyred Saddam Hussein would also create problems for the youngest among us. Once blood had been spilt, the circumstances would be horrific. That is why I say to Ministers—to the Prime Minister really, I suppose—that we ought to swallow our pride and talk to the Iraqis. When the Prime Minister—rightly—visits troops, he should also go to Jordan to hear what the Jordanians say. Yemen was the one United Nations country, apart from Cuba, to vote against the consensus in the Security Council; it is also the country nearest to Iraq, with the most to lose. He should go there.

I believe that the heavyweight European leaders—particularly Felipe Gonzalez, and perhaps Chancellor Kohl, although I should like to see our Prime Minister among them—should go to Baghdad themselves, to talk and talk. That is not appeasement. There is great confusion between dialogue and appeasement. The results of failing to have a dialogue would, I believe, be as horrific as I have tried to outline.

12.14 am

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on his persistence and determination in putting very grave issues before the House. Implicit in his speech was his belief that in no circumstances, even if sanctions were to be imposed for a year and found to be wanting, would the use of force be justified on account of the resulting ecological and financial consequences.

That is not the Labour party's view, and it is certainly not the view taken by the United Nations in a series of resolutions passed by the Security Council. I heard what my hon. Friend said about Zaire, but if one analysed the motives of Security Council members in that way one could rule out almost any United Nations move. The credibility of the United Nations is at stake. If the UN does not emerge from this crisis with an enhanced

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

reputation, the prospects for a new world order, envisaged by the founding fathers of the United Nations in 1945, will be strangled at birth.

The new ecological dimension was given great publicity by King Hussein in mid-November and it added to the anxieties of those who were wholly against the use of force in any circumstances. The consequences of an ecological disaster are of great concern. They were set out in detail in *The Guardian* on 16 November. That newspaper rendered a signal public service by quoting at length King Hussein's speech to the world climate conference in Geneva. One has to treat with respect what King Hussein said, but it is significant that he was not unaware that the message he was broadcasting lent additional weight to a threat which had been made by Iraq. His speech must therefore be considered in that context.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow has considerable scientific knowledge and has many contacts in the world of science, on which he has drawn so well. He will therefore be the first to admit that there are many scientific uncertainties. He seeks scientific precision from the Government, and he seeks precision about the financial and other effects on the third world, but by their very nature the variations are so great that it would be impossible to respond with precision.

All one can say is that, in the worst scenario, the effects would be substantial indeed. For example, will the wells ignite? What will be the prevailing winds at the relevant time? One need only consider Carl Sagan's article in *Foreign Affairs*, "Nuclear Winter: Climatic Catastrophe", in the winter of 1983-84 and the United States Administration's eventual response in 1988, to see the differences on a matter of this nature within the scientific community. Indeed, some of the effects may work in opposite directions. Although the emissions of carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide may lead to global warming, by contrast, with the effect of rising dust, the rays of the sun could be reflected back and there could be a cooling effect, as happened with the eruption at Krakatoa at the end of the last century.

So much in the calculations of the greenhouse effect is unpredictable because it depends on the complicated pathways of the relevant gases. Should we take the most extreme or the most realistic scenarios, and with what effect? What would be the possibility and effect of ignition? What do we know of the effect of the bombing of the Abadan refinery during the Iran-Iraq conflict, and of the fact that that refinery it is now back as it was before?

In the speech that my hon. Friend quoted, King Hussein spoke of the preliminary calculations of our scientists and of the effects being felt within a radius of at least 750 km from Kuwait. The effect being spread about 750 km around Kuwait means that Iraq is very much within the care radius of the effect. What do we make of that? Before coming to the debate, I re-read Milton's "Samson Agonistes", who pulled down the same destruction upon himself. Is Saddam Hussein prepared to act like Samson? It is clear that he has been acting against his own interest. Even if Saddam Hussein were to lay Kuwait to waste by fire, the cloud effect could be as devastating in Iraq as in Kuwait.

We must be aware of the worst scenario adumbrated by my hon. Friend, and of the unpredictability, the differential effects and the motive of the messenger. The key point is surely the extent to which such considerations should affect our policy in the Gulf. My hon. Friend concluded that, in the worst scenario, the effect could be so devastating that, in effect, war could in no circumstances be contemplated. That, however, could be an equally dangerous conclusion.

One clear effect of allowing ourselves to be blackmailed by the direct or indirect threats of Saddam Hussein would be an effective paralysis of policy, not only in this crisis but in relation to any other aggressor with the capacity to create ecological devastation, through threats to the oil fields and wells of the kind that Saddam Hussein is making, or the capacity of a nuclear reactor, for example. If, as a result of threats and blackmail, Saddam Hussein succeeds in producing a paralysis in policy, what is to stop him using those same threats to advance one step further into Saudi Arabia or one of the Gulf sheikhdoms? That would render the United Nations impotent in the face of aggression and strangle at birth the potential enhanced role for that world organisation.

King Hussein has broadcast one of Saddam Hussein's threats, but in the course of the conflict Saddam has made a multiplicity of threats and he can continue to do so. At the start of the crisis on 2 August, he dispatched what he called volunteers into Kuwait, but nothing further has been heard about them. Could not similar "volunteers" be sent into Jordan in the knowledge that that would trigger an immediate response from Israel? Some of the ballistic missiles available in Saddam Hussein's armoury could be fired at Israel, which would trigger a great conflagration in which Iraq, being at the centre of it, would be the first country to be devastated. Such issues should be considered when seeking to evaluate the threat made by Saddam Hussein and set out by King Hussein in his November speech when he called on the expertise of some of his scientists.

We must take the issues raised in the debate seriously. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow may consider himself, alas, to be the Cassandra of the conflict. Certainly, we must be aware of the worst scenario and its potential consequences. The military option has been underscored by Security Council resolution 678. On 11 December my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) stressed in the House that although we seek, above all, a peaceful solution, if in the end the only way to oust Saddam Hussein from Kuwait is by force, then force will have to be used.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow was right to remind us of the possible and awful consequences of war. Above all, we must be firmly behind the United Nations. We must also be aware that if the crisis proceeds further, the responsibility for that will lie squarely at the door of Saddam Hussein as a result of his initial aggression on 2 August.

12.17 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Before dealing with the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I should say that I am in total agreement with what has just been said from the Opposition Front Bench by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). I agreed with him about the ecological consequences and the uncertainties that must surround any assessment of them,

and particularly about the need to support Security Council resolution 678 and all those which proceeded it. On this matter, the Opposition and Government Front Benches are as one.

The purpose of the speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow was to make the essential point that war is a beastly, bloody and unpredictable business. He went on to say that the damage to life and property would be great. His contention was that in such circumstances the military option should not be pursued. Within that general argument, he made a specific argument—that war in the middle east in the present circumstances gives rise to such a risk of ecological disaster that in no circumstances should the use of force be contemplated.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's argument on the ecological consequences of war, I hope that he will forgive me if I make this observation. If I wished to advance an argument of principle against the use of force, I would choose to rely primarily on the certainty of death and injury to those involved in the conflict rather on the uncertainties which underpin the hon. Gentleman's argument and which, in any event, seem to be of a different and lesser order of magnitude when contrasted with the loss of life and the physical injury that may be the outcome of a war in the Gulf.

Mr. Dalyell: There may be a great chasm between us. The Minister's speaks, no doubt sincerely, with the experience of 20 years as a lawyer. I speak with 20 or more years' experience of spending a great deal of my time working on scientific subjects and producing a column for the *New Scientist*, with all that that entails. We may have different ways of looking at the world.

Mr. Hogg: I hope not. I am saying that what is of critical importance in a matter such as this is the prospect of death and injury. To my way of thinking, it is odd to argue a case against war in terms of oil spillage, carbon dioxide emissions and global warming. That is not an obvious way to conduct an argument. The argument should focus on such critical issues as human life, the right to freedom, the need to resist armed aggression, and the maintenance of the authority of the United Nations.

Before I go further into detail, I inform the hon. Member for Linlithgow that not only, for the reasons that I mentioned, do I find that he conducts his argument at an inappropriate level but I believe that he is making himself an instrument of Saddam Hussein's policy. The hon. Gentleman concludes from Saddam Hussein's threat to detonate a series of oil wells that there is no practical action that we can take to reverse the act of blackmail and agression that has taken place. To express such a view encourages Saddam Hussein in his truculence and intransigence and thereby diminishes the prospect of peace.

I do not for one moment suggest that that is the intended consequence of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, but I believe that it is the inevitable consequence. At no stage during the hon. Gentleman's extended speech—I make no criticism of the fact that it was long—and at no stage during his speech in our recent debate on the Gulf, which I have read carefully, did he suggest any clear way of ensuring the reversal of the act of aggression. The hon. Gentleman suggested that his right hon. Friend for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) should go to Baghdad, but that is unlikely to achieve the objective that both the Opposition Front Bench and the Government Front Bench agree is our primary objective.

I will comment upon the ecological arguments advanced by the hon. Gentleman, but first I wish to put them into what seems to me to be the proper perspective so that we can judge the weight that we wish to attach to the hon. Gentleman's objections and to the political facts.

We need to be clear about the nature of Saddam Hussein's conduct. Saddam Hussein's conduct is aggression of the most obvious and brutal kind. He invaded Kuwait—his neighbour and a sovereign state with which he had been in negotiations and in respect of which he had given assurances of non-aggression. In the process of that invasion, he killed a large number of people. Once the invasion was complete, he embarked on a systematic policy of murder, pillage and, it now seems, torture. He also seized and held many thousands of non-combatant western hostages. With the release of those hostages, he has complied only with the first of three conditions imposed on him by the Security Council.

We must focus on compliance with the other two conditions—complete and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait by 15 January and the restoration of that country's lawful Government. Resolution 678 empowers the international community, of which we are part, to use all necessary means to secure compliance with the previous resolutions and, most particularly, to ensure that Iraq leaves Kuwait unconditionally and completely by 15 January. The phrase "all necessary means" obviously embraces the use of force, but the resolution is not itself a call to arms or a timetable for military action. It provides an opportunity for Saddam Hussein to go—and go peacefully—and that he must do, for our sakes and his.

Everyone in the House agrees that because war is such a bloody and beastly business, and because its consequences are so unpredictable, we must do all that in conscience we can do to avert a war. Therefore, as people have said elsewhere, it is right to go that extra mile to achieve peace. We are strongly behind the suggestion made by President Bush that he should have the opportunity —himself and through emmissaries—to put the facts clearly to Saddam Hussein and his Foreign Minister. It is absolutely essential that the Iraqi president should know exactly where he stands. There can and will be no concession on the requirements of the Security Council. No partial solution is possible. There is no linkage with other issues. That is the view of the Security Council, of the United States, of the United Kingdom, of the Arab states which have mobilised their forces in the middle east, and of the European Community.

How are we seeking to achieve that political objective? We are doing so by sanctions, and by the deployment of forces—so far, entirely peacefully. The only person who has used force is Saddam Hussein. The only people who have died have been killed by Saddam Hussein. That is the plain fact that the House must recognise. We must ask ourselves, in conscience, whether sanctions are likely to succeed. That they are causing hardship in Iraq is certain, but is it a level of hardship such as to bring about a reversal of policy or, differently put, to cause the destabilisation of Saddam Hussein's regime? My own belief is that it is not. We cannot forget that the people of Iraq suffered eight years of pointless and brutal war, again promoted by Saddam Hussein, yet did not throw that man out.

[Mr. Hogg]

Therefore, my judgment is that sanctions alone will not bring about a complete and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait.

Mr. Dalyell: If that was the whole story, how comes it that, with the knowledge of Her Majesty's Government, we exported the most formidable arms consignment to Saddam Hussein? If we thought during all those years that he was so terrible, what on earth were we doing exporting arms to him? The answer is clear. Many people did not want Saddam Hussein to be beaten by the mullahs and ayatollahs. Furthermore, if what the Minister said is all self-evident truth, why are the British Government, with their European partners in Rome, so reluctant to see Tariq Aziz?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is doing less credit than he should to his argument. There has been a long-standing prohibition on arms sales to Iraq.

As for the hon. Gentleman's second question as to why we and other countries in the Community have not sent emissaries to Baghdad, it seems right that there should be a single, clear voice expressing the significance of resolution 678 and the previous resolutions, and it seems right that the country which is to shoulder the greatest part of the military burden should provide that voice.

Mr. Nellist: Is my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) not absolutely right in that, in the 1980s, Iraq was the middle eastern country favoured by the western nations? During the Iran-Iraq war, America provided $2·5 billion of food aid and $5 billion of trade credit. In October 1989, one of the Minister's colleagues —now the Secretary of State for Health—told the House that the Government recognised that Iraq had bombed and killed thousands of Kurdish people. Ten days later, however, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry increased British trade credits to Iraq by £400 million. Finally, during the 1970s and 1980s, France sold $25 billion worth of arms to Iraq.

Mr. Hogg: To what is the hon. Gentleman directing his remarks? The facts speak for themselves. Twice in a decade Iraq has launched a brutal and unprovoked attack on its neighbour. First, it attacked Iran and there was a bloody eight-year war, in which more than a million people died. Secondly, on 2 August, it launched an unprovoked attack on a small country, occupied it and murdered its citizens. Those are the facts with which we have to deal. Exploring history 20 years back does not touch on that issue.

Mr. Nellist: What about two years ago?

Mr. Hogg: To what is the hon. Gentleman referring?

Mr. Nellist: I refer to the statement made by the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) when he was a Foreign Office Minister. He said two years ago that the Government officially condemned the Iraqi bombing of the Kurds, when 10,000 people died in Halabja. Ten days later, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry rewarded the same Saddam Hussein, who we are now told is such a bad bloke, by extending to him £400 million worth of trade credits. My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and I are merely showing that two years ago this man was a friend of the Government.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman makes my point for me. Saddam Hussein is a brutal man. By reminding the House of his attack, using gas, on his own people in Kurdistan, the hon. Gentleman makes that point crystal clear. It can be seen again in Hussein's conduct in Kuwait. Many hon. Members will have read the Amnesty report; all hon. Members will have read the summary of it. We must face the fact that the people of Kuwait are being subjected to a systematic campaign of murder and pillage. Iraq is in the process of eradicating Kuwait as a state, of brutalising its people and of incorporating that country into its own. That is a sin against international order and morality. We cannot stand back idly and say that there is nothing that we can do because of the ecological consequences.

The debate has been long and I must bring it to a close. There is no doubt that war is unpredictable or that grave damage will be caused. Some of that damage will be to property, perhaps to the oil fields. There may be emissions, dark clouds and other horrors of that sort. We do not know their extent because the assumptions are unknowable and the consequences unverifiable. The imponderables are too great. Which way will the wind blow? We do not know.

All we can say is that war is beastly, and that beastliness must be judged against the political requirements of resisting aggression and supporting the collective authority of the United Nations. On this point, I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Swansea, East. We cannot stand back and declare that these things are too beastly, horrible and difficult and so we shall do nothing. If that were our policy we should certainly revert to a form of international anarchy.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not want to be committed to a policy when we do not know where it leads——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Mr. Brazier.

Volunteer Forces (Pay and Compensation)

12.37 am

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am most grateful for this opportunity to deal with an issue related to that which the House has just debated. The House has been reminded that, as we approach Christmas, we may also be approaching the prospect of war in the middle east. That is an especially sombre prospect for people serving in our armed forces in the middle east, for those on their way there and for their families. But I have every confidence that they will do their duty, if they have to, in the best possible fashion.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that, in the short time I have been in the House, I have taken an interest in the terms and conditions of service of our regular armed forces. Tonight, however, I should like to focus on our volunteer reservists, of whom I understand up to 1,500 —possibly more—may be required for service in the Gulf. I want to focus more specifically on remuneration and compensation for members of the volunteer reserves who may become casualties as a result of service in the Gulf or of ordinary training. There is an overlap, because some of the people called up for the Gulf may go elsewhere to take the place of Regulars.

The problem is an old injustice that goes back many years and is best illustrated by describing two incidents that occurred during my service in the Territorial Army. Fourteen years ago, the members of my platoon were climbing from the back of a four-tonner in Norfolk. It was a bright, moonlit night and the vehicle was parked on a broad piece of open road and showing lights, as the rules required. A drunk came driving down the road with his car headlights off and drove straight into the men climbing from the vehicle. He knocked three of them over and forced three more into a knot under the back of the vehicle. One man was crushed against the vehicle and suffered multiple injuries to his legs.

As a result of those leg injuries, that soldier was away from his civilian employment for nearly a year. His employer was a responsible company and said that it would like to make up the difference between the money that he received as a private from the Territorial Army and his civilian pay. He was training for a professional job, and there was a substantial difference between the two rates of pay. When we tried to arrange that, we found that the Ministry of Defence policy, which has remained the same under successive Governments, is that, in such cases, any money that a soldier receives from civilian employment is deducted pound for pound from his Ministry of Defence remuneration. Therefore, that man received no money from the Ministry of Defence during the time that he was away from work.

A similar incident occurred three months ago in the home service unit in which I now serve. One of my best and keenest soldiers, a man in his early 40s who had been out of the TA for some 10 years, decided to rejoin, with the rank of private. He fell on an assault course and broke his arm and will be off work for approximately six months. He had reached quite a senior supervisory level in his civilian employment, but for reasons of safety his job required him to have the effective use of both arms. His employer was willing to pay half his normal salary while he was sick, but because that is slightly more than his pay as a private, he receives no money from the Ministry of Defence.

With the Gulf crisis looming larger and many hundreds of Territorials required in the Gulf, it is essential for this matter to be reviewed. A few days ago, I quoted to my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces a letter which sets out three basic questions summarising the problem. My hon. Friend the Minister has told me that he has seen that letter. My first question is general and asks whether this system could be urgently reviewed so that injustices can be righted. I understand that there are only a few dozen cases each year and if so, it should not be expensive to put the matter right for all time.

Secondly, there is the more immediate question of what will happen in the meantime to Territorials who find themselves in the position that I have described as a result of having volunteered or been called up for service in the Gulf. For example, let us examine the case of one of my constituents who is self-employed, has therefore a high income and mortgage commitments and so on. He fully recognises that, while he is serving in the Gulf, he will have to accept some cut in income. If he returns from the Gulf with severe injuries and is unable to work for nine months, and if one of his regular contractors is willing to help him out with a payment because of a long-term contract, will the money be deducted pound for pound from his Ministry of Defence salary?

Will this unjust system apply to Gulf casualties, or, indeed, to people who suffer training accidents while filling the place of a regular soldier who is in the Gulf?

My third question is: what would be the position of a Territorial soldier who, rather than merely being off work for a while as a result of an injury, becomes disabled, is severely wounded, perhaps has his leg blown off or is made blind? It is important that we should be able to reassure anyone in that position.

I ask my hon. Friend to bear in mind two categories of people when he considers these questions. The first are those who volunteered before the order was signed. It is important, given the terms and conditions that have been extended by the sensible system that my right hon. Friend has introduced—getting the Order in Council signed, but then asking for volunteers and calling them up—that the guarantees given to such people are extended to those who volunteered before the order was signed. The other category are those who may be injured when filling in elsewhere, although they are not casualties in the Gulf.

I do not want to labour this point late at night. This is not a packed House, and I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is sympathetic, as, I am sure, are all hon. Members who are present. However, it is an important issue. First, it is disturbing for Territorials who are considering service in the Gulf not to know where they stand on these matters. As recently as last Saturday, I was approached by a constituent, who is a nurse in the TA, and who is concerned about this. She is anxious to do her duty, she is worried about the possibility of casualties in the Gulf, and she wants to do her bit out there to help them. She wants to know what her position will be should she volunteer to go out there and become a casualty herself. She is happy to face that risk, but she wants to do so on a equitable financial basis.

I hinted at the second reason at the beginning of my speech. It is the longer-term fact that we are anxious, with "Options for Change", to get maximum value for money out of our armed forces, and this must mean a greater burden falling on the TA. One of the triumphs of the

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

Ministry of Defence over the past three or four years has been the successful setting up of the National Employer Liaison Committee, and I pay tribute to the work of Tommy MacPherson and his team. It must be obvious that this is exactly the kind of issue that can only cause friction between employers, who see the Minister of Defence as being unreasonable—it is not just this Government, for the anomaly has existed for a long time—when, if they are willing to put money into the pot, the Minister then removes it.

If we want to make a success of the TA, the small sum of money involved is worth expending, to remove this source of friction for both the soldier and his civilian employer. As it happens, the soldier involved in the incident that I described, who is now recovering from his broken arm, is an exceptionally good soldier. Perhaps as a small compensation for his injury, Corporal Chatterton has been picked out for promotion, and he has bent over backwards to say nothing against the Army or the unit. Nevertheless, it is not right that his fellow soldiers should see him suffering considerable financial hardship because of his injury.

I end where I began: with the possible onset of war in the Gulf, it is important that this small but irritating and worrying anomaly should be ironed out. Territorials who go to the Gulf should not feel that they have an enormous advantage over the Regular Army but it is important that, if there is a great difference between their pay in the TA and their pay in civilian life—perhaps because they have a junior position in the TA and a senior in civilian life—and they are willing to go there and their employers are willing to help out, they will not be penalised financially if they become casualties.

I end with my three questions in reverse order. First, what is the position of the TA soldier or his naval or Air Force counterpart, who becomes permanently disabled? Secondly, what is his position if he becomes a casualty and is off work? Finally, will my hon. Friend urgently review this matter for the long term, so that this anomaly can be straightened out?

12.49 am

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) delivered his speech with admirable brevity and succinctness. He having demonstrated that self-discipline, I would not dream of making a longer speech. I shall not, however, apologise for intervening in the debate because of the lateness of the hour. It may be 12.49 am here and we may be up late, but there are members of our forces in the Gulf who will be up all night tonight and all night tomorrow night. At 4 am, as it is in the Gulf, they would regard it as less than their due if we were to be apologetic for debating such an important issue at this hour.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Canterbury on raising the matter of the pay and compensation of our volunteer forces. His interest in and knowledge of such matters is well known. I heard testimony of that yet again this evening, when I had the privilege to host a dinner for the second battalion of the Parachute Regiment. The name which came up for mention was that of the hon. Gentleman. It was possible to bring together some old comrades in arms before the debate began.

I recall that the hon. Member for Canterbury participated in a debate on the Armed Forces Bill on 21 November, which was the first debate in which I spoke from the Opposition Dispatch Box. Like us all, the hon. Gentleman gets the occasional fact wrong, but that does not detract from his considerable expertise and knowledge.

The hon. Gentleman said that he was taking up a narrow or small point. That may be true, but only in the sense that the tip of an iceberg is a narrow or small point. It represents a much larger issue that lies beneath the surface, which is the view that we take of those who volunteer to serve in our armed forces. During a week when events have underlined once again the importance to Britain of its volunteer forces, it is fitting and proper that we should be concerned about the conditions in which they operate and the protection they are afforded by the state.

The issue which the hon. Gentleman has raised is a valid one: why, when people volunteer their services to their country, should they face the prospect of physical discomfort and financial disadvantage? The present position, perhaps by anomaly rather than design, is nothing more or less than a penalty on patriotism. As the hon. Gentleman said, it is possible for a volunteer to give up a highly paid position to serve in the forces. If he is subsequently injured or incapacitated, he can—this has happened to many such people—suffer prolonged financial loss and, in some instances, financial hardship. That is the result of an anomaly in the regulations. Surely that cannot be right. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman suggested that he believes that the Government have some sympathy for his argument. I look forward to the Minister's reply.

I urge the Government to give the matter urgent consideration. I hope that the Minister will, if possible, give specific answers to the three specific questions asked by the hon. Member for Canterbury. For the purpose of brevity, I shall speak only in general terms, but I shall advance three reasons to support my argument, unlike the two outlined by the hon. Gentleman.

First, his case stands on its merits. There is an injustice and, as I have said, a penalty on patriotism, when a man or woman is penalised financially in addition to any injury that he or she may sustain as a result of volunteering to serve in the forces of the Crown.

Secondly, the anomaly requires urgent consideration. At this moment, the Government are urging volunteers to enlist in view of the Gulf crisis. Earlier in the week, they attempted to ease the recruitment of specialist volunteers —many of those people, because of the specialist nature of their jobs, are in highly paid positions in civilian life—by guaranteeing job security. Even on the most cynical approach, the question of recruitment requires immediate attention. The existence of such an anomaly can hardly be conducive to volunteer recruitment during the Gulf crisis.

There is a deeper and more worthy consideration. It would surely be unthinkable that in the awful event of, God forbid, hostilities breaking out in the Gulf, some of those who volunteer and who may be injured might face financial penalties in addition to any personal injury.

I believe that a longer-term consideration is also involved. The outcome of "Options for Change" is still unknown, but one thing is certain—whatever happens, there will be a heavier and increasing dependence on reserve forces. Incidentally, that is something that the

Labour party has advocated for a number of years. It is therefore essential that barriers to volunteer recruitment, such as that anomaly, are finally swept away.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Canterbury. He and I, and, I hope, the Minister, are tonight speaking of volunteers for our reserve forces, who rarely ask what their country can do for them. Indeed, sometimes they do not even ask what they can do for their country. They just know it instinctively, and they do it. It is fitting that, in the present circumstances, we should ask tonight what we can do for them.

12.56 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): It is a great pleasure to reply to this short debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on raising the matter. We all know of his close interest in matters relating to the terms and conditions of service for members of the armed forces. As a member of the Territorial Army, he is exceptionally well qualified to debate this issue, and he did so with knowledge and sincerity.

I welcome the speech of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) who made some excellent points. He also paid tribute to my hon. Friend.

I wish first to make some general points about terms and conditions in the armed forces, because that will help to place the particular points raised by my hon. Friend in a wider context. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House on 17 December, in order to provide job protection, arrangements have been made, and legal powers taken, formally to call out all those who volunteer to serve under the Reserve Forces Act 1980. We very much hope to meet our requirements for reservists with individuals who express willingness to serve, and that makes it essential that all those who volunteer should have their jobs protected.

Members of the reserve forces are, following call-out, paid the same rates of pay as members of the regular forces, including a full X factor. In addition, they will be entitled to appropriate regular allowances such as separation allowance and local overseas allowance where appropriate. As the House is aware, the Government gave an undertaking that service personnel would not suffer financially as a result of being sent to the Gulf.

It seemed, therefore, only right and proper that action should also be taken to protect the financial position of members of the reserves who are called out as a result of operations in the Gulf. As my hon. Friend said, in some cases, they will be highly qualified people who receive high levels of remuneration for their work in civil life. Members of the reserves will have arranged their financial commitments, such as mortgage repayments, in the not unreasonable expectation that their earnings would be fairly constant. We therefore concluded that it would not be right for them or their families to suffer in consequence of their decision to volunteer to serve alongside the Regulars.

We are therefore making available a supplement of up to 20 per cent. of service pay, and more in special cases, which will be paid to those members of the Reserves who are called up, in order to make up any difference between their civilian earnings and their military pay which their employers do not make up voluntarily.

The figure of 20 per cent. was designed to protect the great majority of members from any financial loss as a result of being called up, without going so far as to give an entirely open-ended commitment. But, as I have already said, in exceptional cases we are prepared to consider a higher supplement. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Member for Motherwell, North would like to hear my reply, if the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) would allow him. It is difficult for me to reply courteously to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury.

I hope that the House will agree that this scheme is designed to provide a generous degree of income protection for all members of the reserve forces who are supporting the Regulars during the current crisis in the Gulf.

The service pay of the Territorial Army volunteers embodied in the Regular Army for service in the Gulf would not be prejudiced if they continued to receive money from their civilian employers. In those circumstances, however, they would be ineligible for the special pay supplement, which relates to the loss of civilian pay. That would also be the case for those volunteers who continue to receive full rates of service pay while recuperating from injuries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury has raised a number of issues relating to members of the volunteer forces injured on active service or in training. I shall, in the time available, deal with them as fully as I can.

Members of the reserve forces who are injured in training—as in the case that my hon. Friend mentioned of training in Norfolk—may be paid a disablement allowance at military pay rates during periods of total incapacity when they are unable to pursue their normal civilian employment as a consequence of their injury.

The allowance is paid in respect of loss of earnings, and lasts until the total incapacity ceases, or up to a maximum of 26 weeks from the date of injury. The rate of the allowance is equal to the military salary for the rank held by the member at the time of the injury, abated, as my hon. Friend said, by any sickness benefit received from the Department of Social Security, statutory sick pay received from his civilian employers and sick pay from public funds. Benefits such as company sick pay are also deducted, because otherwise an individual could be better off sick than working.

Should they remain totally incapacitated after six months, or in the event that total incapacity ceases before the expiry of the six-month period but there is a residual disability, they may claim a residual disability award. Arrangements are made for medical examination in order to assess the extent of the disability. An assessment of 20 per cent. disability or greater provides a weekly pension, while an assessment of lower disability leads to a lump sum payment.

If it is necessary for a member to be medically discharged because of an injury which the Ministry of Defence has accepted as attributable to service, the Department of Social Security is asked to take over the case from the date of discharge. If the DSS decides that the disability is of sufficient severity to warrant the award of a war pension, the Ministry of Defence will award an additional pension under the attributable benefits for reservists scheme.

That additional pension will be made at a higher or lower rate depending on whether or not the member loses his civilian job as a result of the injury. If the member loses

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

his civilian job, it will be abated, according to a prescribed formula, in respect of pension benefits received from his civilian employer, but no account will be taken of benefits from personal insurance.

The disablement allowance that I described is designed to compensate for loss of earnings, but I accept that there is an element of rough justice in the system. Some individuals will gain, whilst those with larger civilian salaries will lose if their employers do not continue to pay them in full. However, I assure my hon. Friend that I understand his particular concern over abatement, which he expressed with great force, and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, who has particular responsibility for such matters, will review the rules as far as that is concerned.

I am sure that my hon. Friend's views will be welcome to him in that review, but the Ministry of Defence cannot take into account every shade of disparity in civilian incomes or make exact reimbursement of lost earnings.

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He has fully satisfied me on two points, and kindly said that our noble Friend will review the third. The problem is that, because it is a pound-for-pound abatement, the employer —if he is to help the man at all—must help by more than the amount that the MOD would pay him, in which case the MOD makes no contribution. That is perceived as extremely unfair.

Mr. Carlisle: My noble Friend will take that point into account.

I naturally hope that employers will support the volunteer forces by granting special leave for training, and sick pay, when necessary. By doing so, they will make a significant contribution to the country's defences. Many already help in that way. In return, they can gain considerable benefits from the valuable training that their employees receive.

The position of members of the volunteer forces who are embodied into the regular forces for active service is quite different. If they are injured, they will either be kept on full pay until they are restored to full health, or they will be medically discharged—in which case, they will be eligible for attributable benefits from the Ministry of Defence. In addition, they will be eligible for benefits under the war pension scheme administered by the DSS. In other words, they will be treated in the same way as members of the regular forces of the same rank, and with the same degree of disability. I believe that the provisions made in those circumstances are not ungenerous. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary will write to my hon. Friend as soon as he can.

In conclusion, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's efforts in this area, and I assure him that we want to make our arrangements as fair as possible. I hope that he will take comfort from the review of the abatement rules by my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. I will draw the attention of my noble Friend to what my hon. Friend has said tonight, with his usual zest and robust clarity, and I hope that any points that I have not dealt with can be covered in correspondence with him.

Intergovernmental Conferences

1.9 am

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): About five or six years ago, I became increasingly concerned about the momentum towards what I described in an article in *The Times* as "creeping federalism". Then, I would have regarded our present situation as almost impossible, as far more progress towards federalism has been made in the relatively short time since I began raising these matters on the Floor of the House than even I anticipated.

In Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking Glass", when Alice says, "But you can't believe things which are impossible," the Queen of Hearts replies, "Nonsense. You just haven't had enough practice. I often believe six different impossible things before breakfast." Impossible things are happening, and it is certainly true to say that one of the aspects of the direction that we are taking that I find difficult to understand is the reason for the next step. I have repeatedly said that I voted for the Single European Act. Although I put down an amendment that nothing in the Act should go against the sovereignty of the United Kingdom Parliament, nonetheless I believe that there were, and are, benefits to be derived from that Act as it was enacted.

However, at a number of meetings with people who know a great deal about this issue, I have had great difficulty in extracting from them—or from any recently produced documents—a reason why we should move to the next steps. It is a source of considerable curiosity to me that, whenever one poses that question, one does not get an answer.

There were good reasons for the establishment of the European Community. In 1951, the European Coal and Steel Community pooled steel and coal for the purposes of rationalisation, but also to prevent a repetition of the second world war. There have been thoroughly understandable and well-explained developments in the European Community since then. However, with the ending of the cold war, the picture has changed significantly.

As I have said on a number of occasions, it is fundamental that we consider what is relevant to the 1990s, and not what was thought to be relevant to the 1950s. Also fundamental questions arise out of the developments that are now taking place. I shall summarise those by saying that they turn on the question of consent and accountability. As I have put it on previous occasions, "Who governs?" And it is not just who governs, but how they govern.

For centuries the House has evolved towards democracy. We had sovereignty in the king and crown, and the divine right of kings until the 17th century. Through the centuries we moved towards a greater emphasis upon consent by the people, and accountability went with it. I am worried that the present proposals for the future of the Community mean that we are envolving away from consent and accountability. The other day, the Bank of England released the statutes for the proposed central bank to me. It is quite clear that hon. Members have a different approach towards government, accountability and consent than others in the Community.

I also believe that we may have got ourselves into difficulties as a result of our traditions—for which we should not apologise, because hard experience over many

centuries has taught us that our practical and pragmatic approach pays off; nevertheless, the view that if we pass an Act in the House of Commons we shall be able to change it is no longer so valid as it was before the passing of the European Communities Act 1972. Policy options closed following the agreement that majority voting should be allowed, particularly since the Single European Act.

The 1971 White Paper—"The United Kingdom and the European Communities"—was really addressing the question of sovereignty, along with the concepts of consent and accountability and the democracy that is tied up with those concepts. Although some may think that we have agreed to proposals over the past 25 years, those proposals were within a clearly defined parameter. Paragraph 29 states:

"We shall have full opportunity to make our views heard and our influence felt in the councils of the Community. The Community is no federation of provinces or counties. It constitutes a Community of great and established nations, each with its own personality and traditions. The practical working of the Community accordingly reflects the reality that sovereign Governments are represented round the table. On a question where a Government considers that vital national interests are involved, it is established that the decision should be unanimous. Like any other treaty, the Treaty of Rome commits its signatories to support agreed aims; but the commitment represents the voluntary undertaking of a sovereign state to observe policies which it has helped to form. There is no question of any erosion of essential national sovereignty; what is proposed is a sharing and an enlargement of individual national sovereignties in the general interest."

Paragraph 30 states:

"All the countries concerned recognise that an attempt to impose"—

I stress the word "impose"—

"a majority view in a case where one or more members considered their vital interests to be at stake would imperil the very fabric of the Community."

That could not have been put more clearly.

It could be argued that time has moved on, that we could draw a veil over all that, and that it really does not matter very much any more; I feel, however, that it probably mattes more than ever now, given the proposals that have been emanating from the Commission about economic and monetary union and political union, and the activities of our friends and colleagues in Europe regarding those matters.

The question of consent to the next step—whether or not it is imposed, and whether or not we are asked to agree to it—goes to the heart of the nature of democracy in this country, our system of government and the kind of Parliament that we have here. I understand that the Government suggested some weeks ago that a public statement would be made, perhaps in the form of a White Paper, and that that may still be in the pipeline. I hope that it is. The consent that will allow the House to continue to deliver the democratic accountability that it has delivered for so long is dependent on whether those who are asked to make the decisions are themselves fully informed, and whether the electorate are fully aware of what is being done in their name.

In recent opinion polls on Europe, only a few weeks ago people were asked whether they wanted more powers to be transferred from national Parliaments to European Community institutions. Sixty-nine per cent. said no. They were also asked whether they were in favour of a European central bank. Sixty-nine per cent. said yes. There is enormous confusion about Europe.

When my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) was Leader of the House, I asked for a White Paper. It is no secret that I made the same request to the Foreign Secretary and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). In a Bow group pamphlet that I published some months ago entitled, "The Democratic Way to European Unity: Arguments against Federalism", I argued that it was essential that there should be full and thorough public debate of these issues, not only in this country but in all the member states of the European Community.

I am particularly glad that, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made his statement yesterday, he referred to the fact, as the presidency conclusion showed, that these matters would have to be discussed and considered before any decision could be reached. For that reason, the outcome of the Rome summit was much better. The objective was no longer being pursued on the basis of threats, but on the basis of discussion.

I do not regard the actions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley as having been in any way misconceived. I do not believe that the present Prime Minister or any of those who have played a prominent part in matters relating to Europe during recent months could have agreed to the fixing of a certain date without a programme having been put before them.

We must be properly informed. The European Commission published its proposals for treaty amendment on 21 October. I am disturbed that it took so long for that information to be made available and that I found it necessary to exert such reasonable pressure as I thought necessary to obtain, a week ago last Thursday, the bank statutes from the Bank of England. I now know that a draft treaty on economic and monetary union has been prepared by the Commission. Reference is made to it in the presidency conclusions which, I believe, contain other material that people ought to know about if they are to form a proper view about what is being done.

For many centuries we have entered into treaties and alliances. There is no mystery or magic about the fact that, for more than 400 years, we have entered into treaties and alliances with our colleagues, and sometimes with our adversaries, in Europe. Therefore, I regard the treaties as a perfectly natural development. However, they are being, and have been, rolled into a legal order, which is quite a different thing. As we move on to the next phase, the mixture of politics and law within that legal framework is giving rise to considerable difficulties.

The House has been primarily concerned with the raising of revenues, the disposal of expenditure, grievance, redress of grievance and supply. The proposals for a central bank go to the heart of democracy and consent. The choice by the electorate—the ordinary men and women of this country—of what economic and social priorities they wish is being taken away from them.

For example, the central bank would be created as a matter of primary European law, which would specifically prohibit either the bank or the Bank of England from taking political instructions from any Government. It would sit in secret, would vote by majority voting and would formulate the monetary policy of the Community, including key interest rates and supply and reserves. The board of the bank would be empowered to give instructions to the national central banks, and its council would have the exclusive right to authorise the issuing of notes within the Community—the only notes to have legal

[Mr. William Cash]

tender status according to Community legislation. The bank would be endowed with our foreign reserve assets by the national central banks. The whole would be subject to rulings of the European Court of Justice.

Fortunately, the detailed proposals for a central bank are in the Library for anybody to read. It seems extraordinary that something so fundamental—pages and pages of paper, technicalities and paraphernalia, which are of immense importance to the future running of this country—should be sitting in the Library and not getting the widest possible circulation. It is important that people take on board exactly those proposals amount to. They are not just a pile of paper, but power and authority, and they will affect the running of our economy and of other economies within the European Community. Combined with the information that I have been able to glean from other documents issued recently by the Commission on economic and monetary union, they amount to a totally new type of government for this country, for this Parliament, for our electorate and for Europe.

I was interested to read the letter written by Karl Otto Pöhl to the president of the Council of the European Communities, which says that the statute—which I have in here, dated 27 November 1990—

"addresses Stage Three of Economic and Monetary Union".

Then he refers to "this final stage" as the stage which would be referred to the intergovernmental conference. Time and again, we have heard that we shall go from stage 1, to stage 2, and then to stage 3. Why does Karl Otto Pöhl refer to stage 3? So far as I can make out from the skeleton papers that I have seen on economic and monetary union, at the intergovernmental conference on EMU we are to be asked to agree to stage 3. That is not how the matter has been presented in the past few months to the House and to the people.

The issue is fundamental and raises the vital question of consent. Therefore, I repeat my earnest request that much more public information should be made available through the media, as well by the Government, to ensure that people know what is involved and the timing of it.

It is perfectly possible that my hon. Friend the Minister will say in reply, "Well, we don't have to worry too much, because we are not going to agree to it.". I understand that argument, but I have heard it before. Were it not for the fact that we have democratic accountability in the House and I am able to ask such questions and obtain the appropriate documents, many things would be approved to which we would not want to agree without prior discussion. The French operate by decree, and I should be surprised if members of the French national assembly had the opportunity to raise such matters in the same way as we do. I suspect that the same applies to other countries —for example, Spain.

Another problem with changes associated with EMU is that there are 12 different constitutions in the European Community. To assimilate all those in one homogenous arrangement to deal with questions relating to monetary, economic and fiscal policy is difficult to comprehend. We should be under no doubt that taxation with reference to the single market is included in the proposals—certainly the Commission's proposals to amend the treaty of Rome, which were submitted on 21 October. There are great advantages to be had from our ability to raise such matters in the House. I hope that other countries will be able to observe that, because I doubt whether they are able to get access to such information.

The other day, a French politician had lunch with me in the House. He led me to understand that he and his colleagues could not get their message across on radio or television because of the way in which the media operate. It is difficult for them to have the public debate for which I am calling.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I am listening with great care, but one thought keeps recurring. If the hon. Gentleman is so worried about what he describes as creeping federalism, why did he vote for the Single European Act? The major decisions that we are now considering are a logical result of the process that was started in that Act. The hon. Gentleman had plenty of time to consider that when the Act was first discussed. If he did not vote against it then, why is he suddenly recounting such alarming scenarios now?

Mr. Cash: There is nothing alarming about the scenarios, but it is important that we know what we are doing and that we inform the public properly about what is going on. After all, the issue of consent depends upon proper information.

I have already explained why I voted for the Single European Act. At the time, I tabled an amendment to the effect that nothing in the Act should go against the sovereignty of our Parliament. The question of federalism is separable from that of majority voting on limited areas of competence which do not go to the heart of government, but deal with those issues which relate to commerce, convenience, competition, and so on, all of which I find perfectly acceptable. We want to co-operate in Europe, to be constructive and to be positive. We want a wider Europe but that is different from dealing with the questions which I address to the House this evening about the nature of government. The levers of government, economic power and monetary policy are different in kind. That is my point. To hand them over to a central institution is creeping federalism, not enlarging the opportunities for people to engage in the market place.

Then there is the question of independence. Article 7 of the central bank's statutes makes it crystal clear that

"neither the European Central Bank . . . nor any member of their bank decision-making bodies may seek or take any instructions from Community institutions, governments of Member States or any other body."

In other words, the bank would have total independence.

I saw the Governor of the Bank of England a few days ago on Channel 4. I did not think much of any of his other remarks, but he rightly said that the Federal Government of Germany had a degree of political control over the Bundesbank. That arose from articles 3 and 12 of the German Banking Act 1962. The bank has responsibility for currency stability, but that subject to the overall economic policy of the Federal Government. On several occasions—most recently on merger with east Germany —there was a difference of view between President Kohl and Mr. Pöhl, and Mr. Pöhl had to back down. When we talk about the general economic policy of the Federal Government we relate it to the policy of the Bundesbank.

Article 2 of the proposals for a central bank says:

"The primary objective of the System shall be to maintain price stability."—

which incidentally is undefined. It continues:

"The System shall support the general economic policy of the Community."

That raises an important question. Whose economic policy? That of the Community. Who determines that economic policy? Which Government will determine it? Will it be a decision taken by the Council of Ministers? In line with the proposals of the European Commission to amend the treaty of 21 October, is it to be construed as the single institutional structure which is advocated, leading towards single Government and a single Parliament? I do not know the answer for certain, but there is an enormous amount of pressure in that direction. Anyone who cares to examine the nature of the single institutional structure that is proposed should be on his guard about where it will lead.

Once we talk about the general economic policy of the Community and draw on the analogy of the Bundesbank, which is under political control, yet another series of fundamental questions arise about the direction in which we are going. I have confidence that there are others who are alert to the questions that I have raised. I trust that we shall receive all the necessary assurances from the Minister that we shall not be drawn down that path. However, I am aware of the political difficulties which arise as soon as one starts to say, "Yes, we shall exercise the veto,"—as I have asked the Government to do. Not only shall we not have the central bank imposed on us—we may not have it at all. We will not agree to it.

There is another gloss that can be put on the matter. Initial consent based upon information is one thing. It is quite another thing to say, "All will be well. Once the treaties made by prerogative have been implemented by way of the signing of a further treaty, we can go to Parliament to ratify it. We shall therefore have obtained the consent to which the hon. Member for Stafford has repeatedly referred. Everything will be fine." To obtain consent in that fashion is not the same as obtaining consent to an ordinary Act of Parliament because it cuts at the heart of the ability of the House, on behalf of the electorate, to decide matters of genuine sovereignty.

The term "sovereignty" is easily misunderstood; sometimes I would prefer us not to use that expression. The real question concerns the allocation of functions, powers and authority in relation to the main levers of government. That is what it is all about. The House might be asked in future to agree to treaties on economic and monetary union and political union that pull the rug from under the feet of the British electorate. Such decisions can be made only on the widest possible basis of public information and following the fullest possible debate. They certainly cannot be made on the basis on which the Single European Act went through the House a few years ago.

Personally, I would reject the whole thing, because I do not believe that it is sensible. I hardly believe that this is the right moment for us to accept all this paraphernalia. The Bundesbank is driving up interest rates. There is the problem of absorbing east Germany. The amount of money available in the Community will not be as great as it has been. There is a recession and it is not confined to Britain. Problems are growing in France. When binding rules are imposed, capping the expenditure of countries running budget deficits, how will those countries find the money to implement the policies that their electorates require? Such countries could well be faced with civil disturbance. We must compare our economy with much more primitive economies in countries that are trying to develop a more up-to-date——

Mr. Robertson: Germany?

Mr. Cash: I am talking about southern Mediterranean countries in particular. They have major problems, and I foresee considerable difficulties ahead if the answer to those problems is to provide them with loans, financial assistance and grants involving the massive transfer of regional resources. I do not believe that the money is there, and I think that the paymasters—particularly in Germany and Britain—would have great difficulty in finding the money or, indeed, the will to provide it.

When we consider political union, we are faced with another series of problems. As we have been trying to sort out our economy during the past eight years, should we agree to the majority voting that is being proposed? I believe that the sort of democratic accountability that determines the policies of this country simply cannot be swept away by engaging in the sort of majority voting proposed in the series of measures put before the presidency in the past week.

A vast range of matters have now been raised. I am sure that the Minister will say, and I entirely concede, that they are preliminary issues with which we shall be presented. We shall consider and discuss but probably reject most of them. But there is a tremendous momentum behind the proposals and the other countries are trying to push us along. I look to my hon. Friend the Minister for some assurance that we will be quite clear in our resistance to that pressure.

The issue of accountability and the relationship among the Members of Parliament, the Minister and the Council of Ministers is real in this Parliament. We have Question Time, Prime Minister's Question Time and Select Committees. There is a genuine involvement and a reasonable scrutiny process in both Houses. We have now set up the three new Committees before which Ministers will appear in the fairly near future to answer questions relating to the European Community.

What a contrast between that process and the conference that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and I attended in Rome, where 250 votes were taken in three hours without a word of discussion about any of them. That is simply not the way to run a Parliament. I understand that that organisation, however it describes itself, which I do not believe had any legitimacy or authority, has taken upon itself to present the farcical declaration to the intergovernmental conference as if it had some authority. I was present as a Member of Parliament from this House and was certainly not speaking on behalf of other Members. I hope that the declaration is treated with the disdain that it deserves.

Over and over again the issue of subsidiarity is raised. It is regarded as a critical issue that lies at the heart of the Community's development, but the Minister and the Government must give full attention to that principle, which I do not think is necessary. Articles 2 to 7 of the treaty cover

"The approximation of laws to the extent necessary for the proper functioning of the Common Market."

There is no reason to incorporate the principle of subsidiarity in the treaty, as it already contains those provisions.

[Mr. Cash]

Underlying the blancmange of subsidiarity there is an assumption that the upper tier of government—the macro-economic levers of the central bank and all that goes with it—is already regarded as implicit, and thus not subsidiary. So we shall end up with a meaningless expression that already concedes the tiers of government, which we say we shall not accept, but attaches to economic and monetary union. That would be selling the pass, and it would be unwise and unnecessary.

If people want to amend a treaty, let them get down to discussions. That is a matter of political will, not legal definition. We should put in the words that we want and take out those that we do not. If it is suggested that treaty amendments on the central bank be made now but not come into effect until an unspecified future date, that will not do either. We would then be irrevocably bound to those amendments, as part of the momentum to which I have already referred. We should have no way of ever extracting ourselves from them later. If we are to avoid this, let us not engage in a method of dealing with it which concedes the principle in the first place.

Subsidiarity would also be fatal because of the problem of interpretation by the courts. The courts do not want the concept anyway because it would hand over to them political decisions that they do not want and with which they could not cope. That would be manifest nonsense.

Much of what lies at the heart of the central bank proposal and all that flows from it is based on economic defeatism—we cannot sort out our own problems. We would abdicate our political responsibilities if we engaged in that sort of retreat from the freedoms on which the House has insisted for so long. Our democracy would be —it already is—under serious threat. Elections do not in themselves create democracies. The countries of eastern Europe, after an appalling period of neglect and difficulty, have emerged and had to recreate democracy for themselves. It would be ironic if we went in the other direction.

I have confidence in the Government and in the knowledge that this House will not countenance the proposals now being heaped upon us, but there are tremendous pressures on us to adopt them. The best we can hope for is the belief that we shall be well led in the negotiations, and that recession and Germany's experience of absorbing east Germany may cause EMU to be still born, for the simple reason that it cannot work. If that assessment is fair, it follows that we should try to get that message across to the other member states.

I sincerely hope that the difficulties that I have mentioned will prevent us from being led down a path that will render this House incapable of performing the functions that it has carried out for so long on behalf of the electorate of this country. We have reached the stage at which we should make a decision, and the sooner we grasp the nettle and make that decision the better. We must not allow ourselves to drift inexorably towards the proposals that are in the papers to which I have referred. I look to the Government and the House to protect our people from the difficulties that would arise from following such a route.

1.55 am

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has entered an area of profound importance and all hon. Members, small as the numbers are in the Chamber, recognise that the issues that he raises are well beyond our areas of interest. This is an absurd and unreal time to debate the matters about which the hon. Member for Stafford in his glory speaks endlessly. It is five minutes to 2 o'clock in the morning, and that is not a suitable time for three exhausted Members to attempt to deal with the subject.

Mr. Cash: Four Members.

Mr. Robertson: I did not count the Government Whip.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Harold Walker): Five.

Mr. Robertson: We should also count the Clerk and other people who are not forced to concentrate on the thinking of the hon. Member for Stafford. The way in which the House organises itself is ludicrous. We should not have such debates at such ridiculous times. The important issues raised by the hon. Member for Stafford should be debated at a more appropriate time.

The hon. Gentleman said that more information is needed about the grave constitutional issues that will arise from the intergovernmental conference. At least I agree with him on that, because there is a sad dearth of information about the European Community. More and more decisions are being taken at European level and it is sad that the amount of information and the dissemination of that which was available in the early days of the debate on the Community is not now available.

The Government should take that on board and, as we enter this new and important phase of the intergovernmental conference, they should look carefully to see whether the Central Statistical Office or the information section of the Foreign and Commonwealth office should provide some stimulus to ensure that our people are made aware of how much is done and how much is expected of Ministers at European level. People should know the precise implications for the constitution and the effect on their daily lives of the intergovernmental conference.

The hon. Member for Stafford looks with nostalgia at these issues. As I said in an intervention, much of what is being considered at the intergovernmental conference is not new or fresh. Much of it flows almost directly from a process that was started by the Single European Act. During the many hours of debate on that legislation, Opposition Members warned Conservative Members that we were embarking on a momentous and different process. Therefore, hon. Members voted with their eyes open, and whether they tabled amendments is almost irrelevant. When they voted for Second Reading, on amendments in Committee and on the guillotine for Third Reading, they knew what they were voting for. Therefore, we should all now be aware that, whether we like it or not, we started a process, and the logic of that is coming home to us.

The Labour party warned of what would happen, and we voted against the Single European Act, but we recognised, once it was in place, that it was part of the treaty, and we had to live with it. We have done so, and we have attempted to find a new role and a new policy that embrace the provisions of the Single European Act and we have tried to live with the logic of it and the mood from then on. To look back nostalgically to the grand days of

the past, when this Parliament ruled supreme and alone, is to look back to a world that will never be reality again. Whatever side of the House we sit, and whatever side of the argument we take, whether the argument is about political or economic or monetary union, we cannot reverse the process and pretend that we can go back to the days when sovereignty and independence meant something.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman must concede that my main point was about consent, and the accountability and democracy that go with it. I am sure that he will not throw doubt on the importance of that, which is at the heart of this argument. Should we not be fighting to ensure that we maintain it, because that is important?

Mr. Robertson: That is the kernel of the hon. Gentleman's argument, although it took him a long time to make it. I agree that the question of consent is an important one, and one to which the House will have to return time and time again. The problem for the hon. Gentleman is that many of the powers over which he waxes eloquent have already left the House. Some of these sovereign powers went by the conscious decision of the House, through the European Communities Act 1972 and European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986. Some have gone by policy decision. Decisions on agriculture are taken at a European level because it was felt that that was better than taking decisions on the domestic level.

Other decisions have gone through force of circumstance. We are considering economic and monetary union, and integration on economic and monetary policies because such decisions are not taken by Parliament, the City of London, or financiers, but at a European level. Economic and monetary union is an attempt by the politicians to take back some of the sovereignty that has been lost because of the change in circumstances. It is right and proper that we are concerned about consent, but it has to be seen in the context of the political framework with which we have to live.

This week, we embarked on the process of the intergovernmental conferences. One of the most distressing aspects of our starting on this process is the fact that the Prime Minister announced to the House yesterday that the Government were ready to table their draft amendments to the treaty so as to embrace their idea of the hard ecu. That is a highly commendable proposition, and I hope that the House sees the draft amendments before they are submitted to the intergovernmental conference, because that was the only assurance that the Prime Minister gave.

Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether the House of Commons, for which the hon. Member for Stafford has been standing up so strongly, will get a sight of the alternative treaty that the British Government already have on the desks on Ministers. Will it be made available to the House of Commons before it is tabled in Brussels in the intergovernmental conference? We have been told by ther Prime Minister that the document exists, that it will be tabled and that it will form part of the general debate economic and monetary union IGC.

The political union IGC started on Saturday as well, and so far we have not heard a word about the Government's agenda for that. Given the nature and importance of the issues and the time scale that is being discussed for that IGC, as well as the obvious need for the Government to establish a strong negotiating position at the beginning of the process, we should have as early as possible the formal, concrete proposals that the Government will put to the IGC. There is general concern about that as the process starts, and a question that needs to be answered. Perhaps the Minister will seek to respond and to answer it even at this ungodly hour. I concede, however, that it is perhaps unreasonable to ask him to do so, given the lateness of the debate. If he draws the matter to the attention of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), on his return from Rome, perhaps we shall receive a response through the post.

The hon. Member for Stafford mentioned subsidiarity, a concept which has crept into our language. It was mentioned by the Foreign Secretary in the debate which took place on 6 December. I was surprised that it was. He said that subsidiarity would be raised by the British Government in the IGCs. The right hon. Gentleman said:

"We shall have to look for a way of spelling out subsidiarity in the treaty; then we need to find a way of enforcing it. It will not necessarily have to be enforced by the European Court of Justice; There are other ways of enforcing it.—[*Official Report*, 6 December 1990, Vol. 182, c. 485.]

Today, at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Watford, went beyond that and said that there would be a committee of wise men to decide on issues of subsidiarity.

Mr. Cash *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Robertson: I see that the hon. Member for Stafford shakes his head. Perhaps he does so in dismay, but I am only reciting the views that have been expressed by Ministers who are members of his party.

An interesting Pandora's box has been opened that contains more than the issues about which the hon. Gentleman spoke. It includes, for example, questions about the internal government of the United Kingdom. Although the Government see subsidiarity solely in terms of a division of responsibility between the Community and national Government, the concept of subsidiarity arose from a debate between the German Länder, with their powers being compromised by a dialogue between the Community and the federal Government of Germany. The Länder wanted a specific notion built into the working of the Community relating to their role within the decision-making process.

The Government are embarking upon a path that will embrace a much wider debate about the way in which our over-centralised country will be governed in future. It is a healthy development, but there is a movement in a direction that the Government have not yet taken fully on board.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know, and so may my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, that a paper has recently been written by Mr. Andrew Tyrie, who is now a fellow of Nuffield college, Oxford, and who was a special adviser to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, in which he has vigorously attacked the concept of subsidiarity. He was privy to the papers that I sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) when she was Prime Minister, and the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in April, shortly before the Dublin summit. They included an opinion from a most eminent Queen's counsel in matters relating to European

[Mr. Cash]

law, in which he roundly condemned the concept. There is no doubt, and it is on the record, that it is a highly dangerous concept with which to play around.

Mr. Robertson: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman was talking to me, but I am sure that the Minister will have heard what he said. I am simply drawing the attention of the House to the fact that this is an item that the Government have chosen to put on the agenda for the political union intergovernmental conference. If the Government think, as the previous Prime Minister thought, that subsidiarity would be a way to reign back powers from the Community, they should look carefully at the way in which it is constructed. I hope that areas of this country such as Scotland will be able to find, through the debate on subsidiarity, a role within the developing European Community.

I know that the Minister does not keep up with the Scottish press. Indeed, I am sure that he finds it difficult to keep up with the English—the so-called national—press. If he wishes to take the argument further, he should read the *Glasgow Herald* and *The Scotsman* of the past two weeks. His colleagues in the Scottish Office, including a former Foreign Office Minister who has just joined the Department of Transport, have been engaged in a fierce debate about how Scotland should be represented within European Community institutions. The new Secretary of State for Scotland has come down strongly on the side of a robust Scottish presence inside the Brussels hierarchy, articulating a view on behalf of the Scottish Office and Scotland. That contrasts with the view of members of the former team. There is a wide open debate, and it is interesting that it should be the foreign Secretary who has identified it as a major issue.

I am going way beyond the time limit that I originally set myself. I wish to make just one more point, which I think is important. The hon. Member for Stafford mentioned consent, and the power of the British Parliament to call to account Ministers who participate in legislating in the European Community and the Council of Ministers. It is a serious issue. The House recently reformed some of its procedures to accommodate the greater amount of European legislation, and I believe that more will have to be done. We floated the idea of a European Grand Committee, based loosely on the model of the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees. I still think that it is worth considering that idea, so that hon. Members can fairly and properly deal with the amount of legislation and the amount of activity in which Ministers are engaged.

Some of the practical details of how we come to grips with that are also important. I understand that the Government have now agreed that Members of Parliament will be allowed to telephone at public expense to the European Commission in Brussels and the European Parliament in Strasbourg. It is remarkable that it should have taken so long to agree to that. Given the amount of legislation at European level, to have been prevented even from telephoning those institutions clearly went against the interests of hon. Members and the House.

It is a ludicrous constraint on hon. Members that we are unable to travel to Brussels, where so many activities directly impinge upon our constituencies. It is possible to visit Scapa Flow or to fly to Benbecula or Land's End on parliamentary business, but it is not possible for Members of Parliament, including those who have Front-Bench responsibilities, to go to Brussels, where laws are being enacted that sometimes intimately affect the welfare of our constituents.

I visited Brussels on Monday with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and two other members of the shadow Cabinet. Following an important and somewhat controversial Commission meeting, we met Mr. Delors. We also met Commissioners Papandreou, Millan, Ripa Di Meana and others during that day, and we learned in some detail of proposals that will be made within the Commission for future legislation by the Council of Ministers.

It is ridiculous and indefensible that we should have had to scrabble around looking for private funds in order to buy airline tickets to go to Brussels to be engaged in activities that are so directly our responsibility as Members of the House representing people in Britain. I put it seriously to the Minister that those procedures must be looked at as a matter of urgency if this Parliament is to do its job.

The hon. Member for Stafford has raised an important series of issues. I do not share his alarm and despondency about the way in which the debate is going because I believe the there is a mood in Europe that is healthy, inevitable and, in many ways, desirable. But he is right to say that British parliamentarians must make their views known and should have a chance to make their views known. I hope that in the coming months, at a more reasonable time of the day, more Members of Parliament will have that chance, and we shall have a healthier democracy as a consequence.

2.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on commanding the attention of the House even at this late hour. It is important that these matters are properly scrutinised, and scrutiny late at night is better than no scrutiny at all. I take issue with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) because, although there may not be many hon. Members present, I can assure him that these debates are taken seriously in the Foreign Office and full consideration is given to them in the formation of policy.

Both hon. Members spoke of the need for more information to be published by the Government on all these matters. The Government are considering closely the question of a White Paper. In fact, two White Papers on developments in the EC have already been published and the next one is due in February or March. I hope that that will address some of the major questions under debate in the intergovernmental conferences.

The House will recall the full debate on European Community developments on 6 December before the Rome European Council when many of the points made today were raised and dealt with at some length by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones). I shall deal first with the points relating to the intergovernmental conference on political union.

The task of that conference is to adapt the Community to the changes taking place in Europe. The United Kingdom will play a full and central part in all the debates on the future of the Community.

Mr. Cash: It was during that debate that I decided that if I was lucky enough to be able to initiate a debate on this occasion I would raise these questions, because we were specifically told then that we were not dealing with the question of economic and monetary union and it was only touched on in the debate. It was for precisely that reason that I wanted to draw attention specifically to that aspect, on the lines that I have done today. However, I detect that my hon. Friend is moving swiftly down the path of political union.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As a result of my hon. Friend's rather lengthy contribution, I do not have much time left to make my speech, so perhaps I had better get on or my hon. Friend will have no idea what I have to say.

Our objective is to preserve and to promote the national interest, and to build an open, confident, outward-looking European Community with influence in the world. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that that is in our national interest, as well as in the interests of Europe as a whole. For that reason, we shall enter both intergovernmental conferences intending to make them a success, equipped with our own ideas for bringing about that success, and willing to discuss the ideas of others.

The European Council meeting in Rome on 14 and 15 December agreed conclusions setting out a range of issues that the intergovernmental conference should consider. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at the time, that is a menu. The work of the intergovernmental conference is to decide which items on that menu are acceptable to all delegations.

My hon. Friend rightly made much of consent. He knows that any amendments to the treaty of Rome can be agreed only by unanimity, and will require ratification by Parliament—by this House. The conclusions did not commit member states to accept any particular reforms, nor do they prejudice the outcome of the intergovernmental conference.

As to political union, our objective is to maintain an open, liberal and free-market Community with efficient and accountable institutions. It is important that my hon. Friend should acknowledge that we have our own proposals for revising the treaties to make the Community more effective and shall present them in the course of the negotiations. It is acknowledged by all member states that political union is a process and that it is not appropriate to define the ultimate goal.

Fundamental national identities and institutions must, and will, be preserved. The Government remain firmly opposed to the idea of a federal European Government or a centralised European superstate. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said, the Community is not a glacier which moves inexorably in a preordained direction.

I made mention of next year's White Papers, and I remind my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister promised to report all matters of substance to the House so that it has an opportunity, during the conferences, to consider what is being undertaken on the country's behalf.

One of the main issues under discussion is the democratic legitimacy of Community institutions. That is not a matter of the superiority of one institution over another, or of transferring sovereignty from one to another. Accountability in the Community rests on twin pillars. Ministers meeting in Council are responsible to their individual national Parliaments, and the Commission —acting on behalf of the Community—is responsible to the European Parliament. We should like to strengthen the partnership of European and national Parliaments so that they can most effectively ensure democratic accountability in Community processes.

The hon. Member for Hamilton raised the subject of travel and of telephone conversations, and I will ensure that his points are communicated to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State wound up a debate some weeks ago, he said that he would be holding wide-ranging discussions in the House about ways in which the House could involve itself directly in the Community on behalf of constituents, and in respect of right hon. and hon. Members' other responsibilities.

There will be wide-ranging discussions on that, and I hope that the points that he has made will be taken into those discussions.

We have proposed that the European Parliament's powers of supervision over the Commission, notably on financial questions, be strengthened. We would like to see a recognition of the important role of national parliaments in scrutinising Community legislation and would encourage the establishment of closer links between European and national parliaments. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford attended the assizes in Rome at the end of last month. Perhaps that was an attempt to make a faltering start and was not wholly successful. We certainly recognise that more ideas are needed.

Some ideas and suggestions were made by hon. Members in the debate on 6 December, and the Government will be following those up. However, we are not persuaded that the legislative powers of the European Parliament need to be strengthened. That would certainly upset the existing institutional balance, which it is important to maintain.

Subsidiarity has been mentioned by both contributors to this debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford said, it is a difficult question because it is a mixture of politics and the law. We believe that subsidiarity should be considered most carefully, and should apply in all areas of Community life—not just new areas of Community activity, but existing ones.

The Community should act only where, and to the extent that, it is strictly necessary. I must make one matter fundamentally clear—provided that we can get a satisfactory and agreed definition of subsidiarity, which is the important thing, we shall wish to see it incorporated in the treaty so that it can be most effectively enforced.

I know that the House will support another aspect of the Government's policy, which is to seek better implementation and enforcement of Community legislation in all member states. That is essential if a level playing field is to be achieved. We shall be pursuing the case for strengthening the Court of Justice's powers to ensure compliance, and we shall also be pursuing whether or not

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

it should have the power to fine member states for persistent failure to comply with Community legal obligations.

However, we have already made it clear that we are not persuaded of the case for extending Community competence or qualified majority voting. Suggestions have been made by other member states which we shall examine on their merits, on a case by case basis, as will apply to all proposals tabled at the intergovernmental conference.

We believe that it is necessary for the Community's voice to be heard more clearly in the world. Therefore, we support closer co-ordination of the Community's foreign and security policies in political co-operation. The Twelve have already discussed certain security questions, and those discussions will be more clearly defined and strengthened. For example, they will cover work carried forward in the conference on security and co-operation in Europe, and might also co-ordinate policies on the export of arms and weapons technology.

I emphasise, however, that none of that will affect the right of a national Government to take individual initiatives on questions of national importance. Moreover, we consider that defence is a distinct and different matter. There is a clear need to build up the European pillar of the North Atlantic alliance, and that has already been discussed in NATO and in the Western European Union. The matter has also been raised in the context of the IGC, but we do not believe that the Twelve are the right basis upon which to build a European pillar.

Time is short, and I shall move on to economic and monetary union. In this area, our policy remains unchanged. That was clear to our colleagues in Rome last weekend. Even Signor de Michelis, the Italian Foreign Minister, noted as much when he said after the Council hearing:

"British positions are basically unchanged: they are legitimate positions. It's not just London which has differing views."

We shall try to deal positively and constructively with those differences. That is the spirit in which we approached the first session of the intergovernmental conference on EMU last weekend; it was also the spirit in which the Governor of the Bank of England participated in the discussions among central bankers on the European system of central banks. My hon. Friend referred to that. Those discussions were subject to the following reservation:

"The Governor of the Bank of England records that the UK authorities do not accept the case for a single currency and monetary policy."

It is important for my hon. Friend to appreciate that fundamental point.

We have all signed up to stage 1, which began in July. We all agree that the overriding objective in regard to monetary policy must be price stability; we all agree that excessive budget deficits and monetary financing must be avoided. It cannot be doubted that there is common ground, or that we are committed to the process. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) has said, and as has been said on many occasions, we have often reiterated our commitment to the progressive realisation of economic and monetary union. That is a wonderful phrase, but what are the next steps in the process?

The United Kingdom has produced comprehensive proposals for the next steps, and—as the House has been told—we shall table draft texts to give our proposals treaty form very soon. Their technical viability has not been seriously disputed by our European colleagues. Politically, we believe that an approach along our lines is the only viable way of moving beyond stage 1. Our approach allows the twelve to move ahead together, working with the grain of the market rather than attempting to distort it by imposition, and working with the assent of national opinion rather than against it.

We need only look at the practical proposals advanced by the Spanish, for example—and by a number of other Community member states which are currently talking in rather vague terms of hardening the ecu—to see that our economic reservations are accepted and agreed with by many and that others, too, are looking for a practical way forward.

With regard to the arguments advanced by other member states about a single currency, we do not believe that this is the right way forward. A single currency would have major costs—the cost of losing national control over monetary policy, the cost of jobs lost and localised depression if the transition were anything other than gradual and market-led, and the cost of paying, in effect, compensation to the peripheral states which would demand it to mitigate the disruptive effects on their economies of such a regime. The Government do not believe that the benefits of the proposal for a single currency outweigh those costs and disadvantages.

Without defining any final structure, however, we think that we can still move ahead to the next stage by establishing a European monetary fund to manage the hard ecu. People would start to use the common currency. The market would then decide whether or not the common currency should become the single currency. It certainly could do so, if that is what peoples and Governments so choose.

The key is not to decide now on what the market will tell us soon enough. It is vital not to run ahead of public opinion, as expressed in this House. Clearly we need to think hard about how to gauge that opinion. Recent debates have made it abundantly clear that the democratically elected representatives of the British people would not support the imposition of a single currency. The speed of progress on monetary issues must run with the market, and with market opinion, rather than against it. We must work with the grain of opinion in the House and in the country at large. There is no need now to bind ourselves to a final destination. The Community's interests will be served by setting up new economic and monetary arrangements for the next steps, which will be evolutionary.

Bristol Channel (Pollution)

2.35 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): It is not yet dawn, although it may feel like it, but along the coasts of north Devon, north Cornwall and south Wales people are already at work on the water. I should see, were I in Ilfracombe now—and I wish I were—the lights of the vessels going towards the south Wales ports and Avonmouth and also the lights of vessels coming down the Bristol channel the other way. That waterway is a place of business. Many people live and work on either side of the Bristol channel.

Those of us who represent constitutencies in that area have witnessed with apprehension during the last 15 or 20 years the overdevelopment that has taken place, due to the granting of too many planning applications. That has led to far more sewage and industrial effluent than can be dealt with efficiently. It has to be pumped somewhere. It never occurred to us in years gone by that it would be wrong to empty all our debris into streams, rivers and the sea. Now we are paying the penalty.

I congratulate not just Her Majesty's Government, although they like to be congratulated and in this case deserve it, but the water companies and, in particular, the National Rivers Authority on their realistic views. At long last, money needed for far too long to clean up our waterways has been found for that purpose.

A White Paper entitled "This Common Inheritance" was published in September 1990. It is good to have an overall view of our environmental strategy. The problem is that far too many Ministers have contributed individually to the debate. The White Paper was presented to Parliament by the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Trade and Industry, for Health, for Education and Science, for Scotland, for Transport, for Energy and for Northern Ireland, as well as by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Employment and for Wales. That accounts for 11 members of the Cabinet. Too many cooks have had to say something about the problems that face this narrow waterway.

This beautiful, busy waterway begins in the east at Bristol and I can clearly see beautiful south Wales from the hills in my constituency as I look over the Bristol channel. On the south side of the Bristol channel we have north Devon, north Somerset and north Cornwall. It has taken me a long time to study and determine which problems can be sorted out, if not during the lifetime of this Parliament certainly during the lifetime of the next.

Britain is not lagging behind in the clean-up race. Our problem is that, being an island, we have proportionately greater problems cleaning up the water, because we have used that water as our dustbin and cesspool for so long. In the old unenlightened days, when we had no thoughts of conservation, we had an effective system for getting rid of refuse into the water. Now, the sheer volume of refuse going into the water has overstretched and overfilled the waters of the Bristol channel.

The Bristol channel is a maritime cul-de-sac. Unlike the English channel, where the water sluices through twice a day on the tide, there is no sluicing effect, although every Minister appears to have heard of the Severn bore. We have a huge rise and fall in tides—up to 36 feet twice a day at Ilfracombe—but it is a huge up and down movement, not an in and out movement, as everyone assumes, and thereby hangs our problem. If this huge tidal range whisked everything away, all the theories would be wonderful, but it does not work that way.

I wish that I could play the tape of an elderly gentleman who spoke to me at length and told me that, if a body went into the water off Hartland, he would know where it would appear a day or two later, depending on whether there was a neap or spring tide and on the other variations in the water which only a local person would know. To my abiding sorrow, some people have drowned in the area in the past year or so. Often, that drowning appeared to be the result not of a lack of ability among the people who have the machinery to call for help but because people did not have the local knowledge of where a body or perhaps a boat would float.

It is wrong to assume that, because the tide goes up and down, it goes in and out. It does so on the beach, but not in the Bristol channel. Eddies of filth go round and round for days and although computer forecasts tell us exactly what will happen in the ideal world, they do not allow for the changes in the tidal pattern every day of the year.

The Government have attacked the problem and have accepted it. I am delighted about that, although I feel that too many Ministers are involved for our small waterway.

Statistics in the White Paper show that 96 per cent. of properties in England and Wales are connected to the sewage system—the highest proportion in Europe and that is very good. Eighty-three per cent. of sewage is treated inland. I suppose that that is good, but a lot of the muck from inland makes its way into our coastal waters. According to the White Paper, Britain disposes of 17 per cent. of its sewage by discharging it into the sea, mainly from coastal towns. If 17 per cent. of sewage goes into the sea,it is no surprise that 24 per cent. of our bathing waters do not comply with European Community regulations.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I must give the hon. Gentleman a personal anecdote for his valuable exposition. As a boy, I collected cockles on the beach at Swansea directly opposite Ilfracombe and ate them with my family. No one would dare do that now, as it would have the most awful consequences.

Mr. Speller: The cockles were much better on our side of the water. They were sold to visitors, who said, "They are marvellous." As the hon. Gentleman will know, in the past the more sewage that was discharged into the sea, the bigger the cockles were. The water may have had natural sewage in it then, but now it has a lot of unnatural sewage —effluent and traces of cadmium and of all the chemicals that are used in industrial processes in south Wales and Avonmouth. As we dispose of more sewage into the water, and as we allow so much planned overdevelopment, so the problem becomes worse.

The shape of the waterway is important. I am the chairman of the all-party alternative energy group and I should love to see a Severn barrage built. However, were it to be built in the next few years, the area between it and Bristol would get in the "Guinness Book of Records" as the biggest cesspit in the world. I believe that a treatment plant is about to be built at Avonmouth. Although some might get indignant and say how wicked it is that it was not done earlier, we have now accepted the problem. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can tell me about some of the remedial things that will be done by Wessex Water,

[Mr. Speller]

Welsh Water and South West Water. None of the water authorities is the villain of the piece; they are all using old technology to the best of their ability.

Given the intervention from the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), it is right that I should recount some of the complaints that led me to make my speech. In May 1988, I had a debate on a similar subject, which was then answered by the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I am happy that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment is answering tonight. Whether one likes it or not, his Department must pull together all the various strings that relate to our waterways.

I have with me a few examples of the large volume of correspondence I have received, which typify the problems encountered by individuals and groups. Such letters have caused me to intensify my crusade to do something positive about our channel.

One letter came from a tourist from Northampton. He complained about the disgusting state of the sea and the lack of signs to warn against swimming in it. I do not look forward to the day when there are warnings against swimming, as that would do the tourist industry no good. Thankfully, we have not reached that stage, but there are dangers and we need no signs to notify people of them.

The gentleman wrote to say that he had contracted middle ear disease from swimming in raw sewage. He said that the sea was too dangerous to swim in and that he would no longer holiday in the area because the water was not fit to swim in. He is not over-egging that pudding: without doubt, a problem arises at certain times when so much sewage seeps into the sea around high tide.

The principle is simple. Sewage is collected in the old-fashioned way, in the old tanks. As the tide rises the non-return valve of the tank opens. The theory is wonderfully simple—the sewage should be sucked out on the ebb tide beyond Lundy to southern Ireland, where it becomes their problem. But it does not happen that way, because, especially on the neap tides, the sewage ends up coating the local sand below the extraction point. That is not a sensible system, although, strangely enough, we did not object to it for many years.

Another complaint came from an excellent modern holiday camp. The management wrote to say that it was not right that tourists should visit the camp and go home with mild symptoms of illness because of the cosmetic light —much of it is cosmetic—of faeces in the water.

The sub-aqua club based in Ilfracombe is worried about plans for long sea outfalls. The club caters for people of all ages and both sexes and it has been operating for many years. I go back to the days when sub-aqua diving meant a face mask and a snorkel, but things are far more developed now. The club secretary wrote to me about the underwater conditions in the Bristol channel and said:

"We have noticed over the last few years that the underwater visibility has been getting progressively worse."

He said that the club had shortened its season of diving from April to November down to June to September and that, even at the height of the season, visibility was never as it had been three to four years ago. Under the water in some parts of the channel, club members pass enormous foul-smelling slicks of apparently untreated effluent; and they can be found in nearly every part of the channel. There is a corollary to that; the letter continues:

"We have noticed a decrease in the amount and variety of sedentary marine life"

It is noted that, even around Lundy, which was specifically created as a maritime nature reserve some 10 years ago, the amount of sea life has gone down and the amount of pollution has gone up.

The club continues:

"There is a foul smelling, slimy, brown silt covering every underwater surface".

I draw attention to that phrase because half of our problem is that there are two problems. The obvious problem is that of sewage—I am sorry to take the time of the House on such an exciting subject—leaking into the water from the various pipes from towns and villages. The greater problem has nothing to do with raw sewage. It is caused by dumping sewage sludge 11 miles off Ilfracombe, mostly from Wessex Water.

In the House I could not use the language that my fishermen use about the treated effluent that comes from Avonmouth. The rough-treated sewage sludge looks rather like shiny brown sand—for want of a better word. When it is dumped, it sinks and coats the sea bed. That is the major environmental problem. Everyone thinks that the sewage coming out of the pipes is the main problem, but it is only the half of it. This is what causes men, women or children to have tummy upsets. But the problem for maritime life is the dumped sewage sludge which covers the sea bed.

Each year I buy for very special members of my family a little smoked salmon from a particular retailer on the north Devon coast. About eight hours ago, I was speaking to the retailer. She told me that they had sold their fishing boat because there were no bottom fish left, which means fish such as plaice and skate or what we might call flatfish.

The fish are not there any more because the vast amount of dumped sediment has covered their sea bed habitat. We have two halves to our problem—the dumping of large-scale sewage sludge and the oozing in of local sewage, for want of a nastier word. That family has been fishing for three generations off Appledore and Barnstaple bay.

A surfing instructor wrote to me saying:

"I am writing to express my concern about the pollution", and enclosed some photographs.

"These shots show women's sanitary towels etc., etc., in rock pools and gullies where children play.

"I myself am a surfing instructor . . . I teach young people to surf."

He said that he was worried about their catching infections. And so the sad saga of complaint goes on.

The Ilfracombe angling club took a slightly different line. It said that there is a great deal of marine debris, including old nets and plastic, so that all the debris of mankind is added to the sludge and sewage dumped in the sea. The secretary mentioned that the club's motto is "Conserve, protect and promote". Perhaps Members of Parliament for the area might adopt this.

The last but one of the points made by my constituents was put by a gentleman with a marvellous Devonshire accent who spoke to me on tape. He said that the problem with the authorities was that they knew everything in theory but not a great deal in practice. He was not unkind to them. He said that they were good, well-intentioned, knowledgeable people who sought to help. I stress that we are well served in the south-west by our water companies and the National Rivers Authority. The old gentleman made a point that I made earlier—that the tide does not go

in and out with a great big whoosh that cleans out all the area. He says that, if one lets a vessel drift in the water, it will not go right out with the tide and come back on another tide: it will go out some way with the waves and eddy around. So, too, does all the mess in the water.

In our part of the world, we like to think that we are green all the way through. Some of my green friends wrote to me about the plastic that holds six-pack beer cans together. They sent pictures of sea birds which had got the non-biodegradable plastic stuck around their necks and been drowned. We are a thoughtless people when it comes to our recreation.

I can now identify the four specific problems: the sewage sludge, the raw sewage which oozes out from the drains, the debris of our plastic civilisation and the danger to wild life, caused by propellers, old fishing nets and lines. It causes a nuisance also by wrapping itself around the propellers of boats. We must consider carefully what people throw into the sea.

It is not against the law for a boat going up the Bristol channel to pump out its tanks. Interestingly, last year the port of Bristol—Avonmouth—had a notice on the docks asking people to discharge their refuse there but stating that a charge would be made. If one charges a chap for the collection of his refuse, he is liable to dump it somewhere in the channel. That is another pollution which has happened.

Having set out the nastier side of our problem, let me deal with what I call the winners and the losers. One of our two major problems is the quality of our bathing beaches and of the water itself. In respect of our bathing beaches, there is an easy set of winners—the blue flag winners. The trouble is that there are only four blue flags along the stretch of coast with which I am concerned, which shows the local gravity of the problem.

Hoteliers and tourist operators throughout the country will be quick to say, "We have a blue flag; come to us," meaning, "They haven't got a blue flag; don't go to them." But the blue flag is not an absolute standard. I doubt whether many hon. Members realise that the blue flag is a snapshot taken at an instant in time—the day when the tests are taken.

My constituents know that the pollution on a beach depends on whether the tide was high or low that day and on weather conditions. People who keep their beaches clean and are awarded a blue flag may be horrified to find that they do not get one next year. They will wonder why, and there may be great upsets on the local council, but, in essence, the blue flag system is a "spot the winner" campaign. It has nothing to do with who will win the league and is more like the FA Cup than the League.

I have a list of the winners, most of which are beaches on the south coast of Devon where the channel does the sluicing job which the Severn estuary and the Bristol channel does not do. On the other side, we have the list of shame. It is not a list of true failures, because many beaches that have failed the blue flag would not have failed had it been taken the next day, while many of those that passed might have failed on the following day.

Let me concentrate on the area that I know best. Fourteen points of discharge around the north Devon coastline are approved and licensed by South West Water. Let me tell the House the amounts of crude sewage that are licensed to go into the water from various locations: 50 cu m; 2,500 cu m; 2,400 cu m; the crude sewage from a hotel—I do not know how much that is; crude sewage from a population of 6,000; sewage from a lighthouse and sewage from a cottage. Then we have: 5,000 cu m; 220 cu m; sewage from a holiday park; sewage from another holiday park, 800 cu m; sewage from a Christian holiday park, and 953 cu m from a village. A cubic metre is quite a lot and all that sewage is legally licensed to go into the water along one relatively small stretch of coast. The same applies in the counties adjoining mine and the counties across the water in the Principality.

I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us what it is proposed we should do, but before he does that, let me tell him what I should like him to do. The first and simplest step concerns the dumping of sewage sludge. We have agreed with the EC regulation and law saying that this must stop by 1998. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us a date much sooner than that. My friends in the National Rivers Authority tell me that it could well be ended by 1993. It would be a great step forward if we were two or three years away from ending the dumping of sewage sludge. I hope that we can work along those lines.

Sewage sludge has to go somewhere, however, and that is also our problem. Two days ago, North Devon district council turned down on environmental grounds a planning permission application for a wind generator. It is a bit rich for a council to reject a clean, renewable source of energy on environmental grounds, but it shows that all of us worry what will be built in our own locality. Somewhere along the line, we shall have to deal with sewage sludge. The most logical way is by incineration —the method chosen by South West Water and, I hope and believe, by Wessex Water. The authorities always tell us that 95 per cent. of sewage sludge is made up of water so that if one boils the water off, only 5 per cent. is left.

Let us be not mealy-mouthed but brave when it comes to saying, "When they change the system, they must also will the means and the powers to have treatment on land." No one on land will want to have what used to be called a sewage farm adjacent to his property. As with the wind generators I mentioned, councils and the national Government must give guidelines on where water companies will be permitted and encouraged to dispose of sewage. It is no good saying, "You must stop doing this" if one does not say, "You may do this instead".

When the main dumping of sewage sludge ends, marine life will surge back up the channel. We do not see porpoises —although I believe that two have been seen recently somewhere off Lundy—and whether we still get the odd dolphin, I do not know. In years gone by sea mammals were to be seen everywhere. The lady who sold her fishing boat sold it because there are no bottom fish. There are no sea mammals to be seen any more, but there should be and they will come back. If we can clean up the Thames, we can certainly clean up the Bristol channel.

The other major problem is the leaching of sewage in smallish quantities—penny packets—from so many outlets all along both sides of the coast. I congratulate South West Water, which now, after probably the best privatisation ever, is goaded and rightly looked at by the National Rivers Authority. Of its own free will, the authority is determined to solve the sewage problem in my part of the world, but that is only a small part of the whole.

The logic is simple—the authority will put collector pipes along the back of the coast where, at present, relatively small dribbles go into the sea; it will collect them, treat them and, presumably, incinerate the refuse. There is no problem about doing that, except for the cost. It can be

[Mr. Speller]

done, but it is not the responsibility just of the water company or even of the district and county councils that share responsibility for the disposal of waste and the granting of planning permission. We must encourage and allow disposal sites on land. If we do not treat our sewage on land, we shall sooner or later destroy our marine environment and, rightly, be penalised for disobeying the European Community's codes.

I do not seek villains, because there are none. Everyone means well and seeks to do well. I can speak only for my district. In days gone by, we had a good water authority. Now there is a water company and a rivers authority which work well together—it is a joy to see how well they do so. We, the individual water users, must pay—nothing is cheap in this world, and pay we must.

When it comes to getting our act together, the Department of the Environment is the right Department to look after our side of things. I am delighted that tonight's debate is being answered by a Minister from the Department, rather than by an Agriculture Minister.

Sooner or later, one Department should hold all the powers. At present, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gives the licences for dumping, while permission to allow sewage into the sea is granted by the Department of the Environment.

When the sewage outlets are no longer used, how much industrial effluent will there be, because the Severn and the Bristol channel are industrial districts? It is no good saying that it should be blue in the water and green in the environment, if that means that the industries of Avon and south Wales have to close. I am delighted to say on behalf of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith), who cannot be here this evening, but is part of my cross-party, cross-channel alliance—because this is not a party political matter—that, at Lavernock point, which serves the west of Cardiff, the outfall of raw sewage is to be replaced with a long sea outfall. That is the bad news, because the problem with long sea outfalls is that they point from south Wales towards north Devon. Meanwhile, we also have long sea outfalls which point from north Devon towards Wales. If we are not careful, they will meet in the middle and the centre line of the channel will be the recipient of all the sewage. Everyone will say, "We have cleaned your beach", but will not say that we have mucked up someone else's beach on the other side of the water.

The hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan then gave me the good news—that a secondary treatment works will be put in place. That is the right answer. It is certainly not enough now, and never has been, to treat sewage only once —which means only chopping it up and taking the lumps out. The coastal tourists and residents deserve at the very least a clean sea and environment.

Tourists complain not about sludge on the sea bed—that is the fishermen's complaint—but about faeces in the water. Sludge and sewage are equally damaging and both should be treated on shore. Wildlife and the human race both need a clean environment. We build better roads, at great cost, and we subsidise railways to help our countrymen and women to visit the coasts, only to repel them with pollution in the water and a sore throat to take home.

I warn of the NIMBY factor. I understand people who say that they do not want refuse or sewage incinerators in their areas. It is not enough to stop polluting the sea; we must not pollute the land either. This is where the major problem may arise. We all accept that the Bristol channel must revert to what it used to be: a beautiful place of business and of leisure—a place to which those who, like me, have lived all their lives in Devon, would like to take our children and grandchildren to play in the water in safety and without fear of sickness.

I do not like the fact that beaches are often fouled with dog mess and with the mess of humanity coming back from the sewer on to the beach. We can stop this and I hope that the Minister will reassure me that we will. I do not know when I shall be lucky again in the ballot—whether in 12 or 18 months' time—but I will continue to press on in the right direction.

I have three major wishes for the future of my constituency. One relates to roads and another to the continuation of the family farm, but I shall not bother the House with those two now. The third is that we must clean up our coast, so that in due course we pass on a clean coastline and a pure water supply. That is not an ignoble aim and it is one which I aim to achieve within my parliamentary life.

3.5 am

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I congratulate the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) on having the perseverance to stay here until the early hours of the morning so that we might have this opportunity to debate the serious pollution in the Bristol channel. I thought that there was an element of contradiction in what he said, however. He congratulated the Government, the water companies and the National Rivers Authority at the same time as pointing out the real problems which still exist despite the Government's having been in power for more than a decade. The water companies and their predecessors, the water authorities, have been in existence since 1974 and the only new element is the recent privatisation of those authorities and the introduction of the NRA. I hope that there will be much more rapid and dramatic improvements now than there have been in the past decade. The hon. Gentlemen's remarks reminded me of a policeman who regularly stops an old car and congratulates its driver on having only two bald tyres whereas a month before he had four.

As the hon. Gentleman said, there is a serious problem. While there have been improvements, the problem shows no signs of being resolved quickly enough. The part of the south Wales coast that can be described as the coast line of the Bristol channel—as far as Port Eynon bay on the Gower, beyond which we move into the wider sea—has 15 designated beaches. In 1986, 12 failed and three passed. In 1987, eight failed and seven passed. In 1988, six failed and nine passed. Last year, five failed and 10 passed. Those figures relate to tests for E. Coli and all coliforms.

The 1989 figures for salmonella show that 11 beaches failed and only four passed. Judged on enterovirus, four failed and 11 passed. Tested for faecal streptococci all 15 designated beaches from Jackson bay in Barry across to Port Eynon bay failed.

The hon. Member for Devon, North spoke about blue-flag beaches, of which Port Eynon is one. In 1989, 19 non-designated beaches interspersed with designated

beaches were sampled; nine failed and 10 passed. The situation in the Swansea bay area was so serious that in January last year Swansea city council lodged an official complaint with the European Commission asking it to take the Government to the European Court of Justice for failing to comply with the 1976 bathing water quality directive. The Government should have complied with that directive by 1986. This year in the Swansea bay area, bays such as Langlend, Liverslade, Bracelet, and West Pier slip all failed the salmonella and enterovirus tests. Mumbles pier, Mumbles slip and West Pier slip all failed the E. Coli and coliforms tests.

In the west country, untreated sewage is discharged from three short outfalls at Portishead Burnham, Blue Anchor and Watchet. Untreated sewage passes through storm drains and overflow pipes at Pill and Clevedon South beach. Industrial waste is discharged from short outfalls into the Kings Weston Ryhne. There is screened sewage from long sea outfalls at Minehead and Portbury and what is described as settled sewage is discharged from the Avonmouth sewage treatment works. Chopped, cleaned and chlorinated sewage is discharged at the short sea outfall from the Blackrock pumping station which, in effect, is Weston-super-Mare sewage.

More than 100,000 tonnes of sewage sludge per year is dumped further out at sea by Wessex Water. River Avon untreated sewage sludge is pushed into the estuary at short outfalls at Pill and Avonmouth. Storm overflows, which are not measured, add to the problem. Between Cleveland and Blue Anchor bay there are 10 designated beaches. The E. Coli and coliforms tests show signs of improvement, but the results are a little up and down. Four failed in 1987, seven failed in 1988 and six failed in 1989. As the hon. Member for Devon, North said, the results depend on which day the samples are taken. Perhaps because of the day on which samples were taken, none of those beaches failed the E. Coli and coliforms tests. Three of them failed the enterovirus and salmonella tests.

Wessex Water aims to comply with the directive on its side of the Bristol channel; and on the Welsh side, Welsh Water aims to comply by 1995. There seem to be some problems because the Minister told the House on 14 November that present indications are that 1995 may not be a practicable deadline for nine large schemes on which there are major technical difficulties. That was for Wales as a whole, but some of those schemes were along the Bristol channel coast.

The hon. Member for Devon, North referred to industrial waste and said that the Bristol channel was a cesspit for south Wales and the west county. He might like to know that, in 1988, the Welsh water authority published information on inputs into the Severn estuary and the Bristol channel at the end of the 1970s, of heavy metals and other similar contaminates. It showed that, per day, 13.3 kg of mercury, 62,000 kg of iron, 1,150 kg of lead, 2,780 kg of manganese, 464 kg of nickel, 5,160 kg of zinc, 61.6 kg of cadmium, 224 kg of chromium and 621 kg of copper were dumped, although many of them are serious pollutants.

In 1984, a report by Morlais Owens, who at that time was the assistant director of scientific services for the Welsh water authority, was published. It was about the Severn estuary and appraised the water quality there, dealing partly with what would happen if the Severn barrage were built. It pointed out that a great many water-borne pollutants were brought into the Bristol channel and the Severn estuary by the rivers, including both industrial and domestic discharges. He also pointed out that atmospheric deposition contributed the greatest proportion of lead and zinc—58 and 42 per cent. respectively, as well as 21 per cent. of the cadmium, 19 per cent. of the copper and 12 per cent. of the nickel.

Mr. Speller: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is bringing in many more points than I thought that I should have time to make. Does he agree that the discharge of much of the metallic and other industrial pollutants could be cut if the sludge being dumped from the Bristol side and the Welsh side were dumped further out? The hon. Gentleman might take that suggestion to his friends at the Welsh water authority and suggest that they steam a few miles further west. I should be most pleased if they would.

Mr. Griffiths: The further we go from the coastlines, whether on the Welsh or the English side of the channel, the more the pollution in the main body or the channel is minimised. The hon. Gentleman has pointed out that by far the best solution is to end the dumping of sewage sludge as quickly as possible, and I shall return to that point.

While I agree that the pollution is mainly caused by the sewage brought into the Bristol channel, I should mention the report published last week by Friends of the Earth. It was damning about many sewage treatment works in England and Wales, bearing in mind that, on privatisation, almost 20 per cent. of some 6,500 sewage treatment works had already been given relaxations as they were breaking the law. Despite that, there are still hundreds of sewage works in the United Kingdom breaking the discharge regulations. We know that the National Rivers Authority has been sadly hampered by the way in which the law has been constructed. It has to produce a mass of bureaucratic evidence, tied up in the red tape that the Government claim to abhor, which makes it difficult to bring prosecutions. In Wales, 69 of the treatment works were breaking the regulations. When the NRA was created, Lord Crickhowell told us that the Government were creating the strongest environmental agency in Europe. Alas, it has proved to be hamstrung by the Government's legislation.

We know that Welsh Water has a licence to dump up to 55,000 tonnes of sewage sludge and Wessex Water has a licence to dump about 300,000 tonnes. We know, too, that many licensed allowances are being taken up. Some interesting figures were published in a parliamentary answer earlier in the year. In 1979, the total dumped was as high as 358,000 tonnes. It increased to 393,000 tonnes and then started to decline. There was a fall to 328,000. In 1983, it had fallen to 230,000. It then increased to 305,000 before there were falls to 259,000, 257,000 and 238,000. Was it being stopped? The answer was no. In 1988, it was 275,000 and last year it had increased to 306,000. That was the amount of sewage sludge dumped in the central part of the Bristol channel.

There is some controversy about whether the dumping has damaged the aquatic environment. The hon. Member for Devon, North thinks that it has and I tend to agree with him. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, however, says that the balance has not swung that way. Considerable research has been undertaken in the North sea. Both the United Kingdom and Germany have

[Mr. Griffiths]

published the results of their North sea research for consideration by the Oslo commission. The German bight studies have shown that the bottom fauna, on which fish life often depends, began to be impoverished in 1969. By 1977, the Germans were recording an increased prevalence of fish disease. In 1981, they stopped dumping as a precautionary measure. We know that there is still a difference between the United Kingdom authorities and the Germans on the exact impact of sewage dumping at sea.

Wessex Water is committed to end its dumping by 1993, and all strength to its elbow. One of the ways in which it will deal with the sludge is to have it dried and pasteurised, using methane generated by the sewage treatment process. It will produce a soil additive that will be a peat substitute. That will be environmentally sound in so many ways and valuable peat bogs will be saved as well.

German research on the dumping of sewage sludge shows that is definitely blights the bight, so what deadlines have our Government set themselves? Welsh Water is committed to 1995 while other water companies have a slightly earlier deadline. It seems that 1997 is the latest date. I understand that tomorrow, or later today, the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will be meeting the Vice-President of the Commission, Carlo Ripa di Meana, who is responsible for environmental matters, to persuade him that the Government are doing everything possible to comply as rapidly as possible with the requirements that have been accepted. Yet there is so much evidence to show that they are not.

Only last week there was the scandal of Welsh Water deciding to use £31 million to buy into the South Wales electricity distribution company. Does that show that priority has been given to public health so that there is compliance with the European Community directive on bathing water quality, which was introduced in 1976? It does not. As I stated in a letter to the Vice-President of the Commission, which I hope that he will take into account when he meets the Minister—I faxed it to him today and he will have it for the meeting—Welsh Water has shown that it attaches greater priority to buying electricity shares to boost long-term profitability for its shareholders, at the expense of its customers, than to the 1976 directive. That £31 million is not far short of the total amount that Welsh Water spent in the previous three years trying to deal with the pollution problems of its sewage outfalls. In fact, it spent £41 million, three quarters of that being spent on buying electricity shares. Why could not Welsh Water use that money, or at least a part of it, to speed up compliance with the directive?

The sewage treatment works are breaking even the relaxed standards that they were given on privatisation. Does that show priority? It does not. Another serious problem concerns the National Rivers Authority budget. The NRA's published corporate plan for 1990-91, says that in 1991 it will need grant in aid of £119 million if it is to carry out its work anywhere near effectively. On 14 November, the Government announced that they were increasing their grant in aid to the NRA, but only to £106 million. That was a substantial increase over the previously published figure, but it is still £15 million short of what the NRA felt that it required.

The corporate plan shows that even that figure is below what the NRA needs. It has warned that considerably more expenditure will be needed if water quality improvements are to be secured at a reasonable pace. It says that significant amounts of investment are needed to reduce pollution levels over and above current estimates of expenditure, along with increased monitoring and regulatory activity by the authority in order to achieve the authority's mission to reduce pollution substantially and improve water quality.

Even the £119 million that the NRA wanted in grant aid was not sufficient to translate those wishes into the necessary figures for the budget. Once again, the Government's grant in aid was short of what the NRA required. Does that show that priority is being given to the problem? It is true that matters are improving and that more money is being spent, but we must ask whether it is sufficient.

One or two other problems have not yet been mentioned. They have nothing to do with sewage, but they could result in bad pollution of the waters of the Bristol channel. Recently my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) tabled several questions about the collision of two boats—the Marias AS and the Bell Ranger just off Newport on 24 April. One of the boats contained what was rather whimsically described in the first answer as drums of chemical waste. When my hon. Friend pressed the issue, the Minister admitted that the drums of chemical waste were classified as a toxic substance. As it happens, on this occasion the damage was not serious as the drums did not split open. However, we have only to think about what happens when dangerous chemicals get into our rivers to be able to imagine the sort of impact that that accident might have had on the Bristol channel.

There have been other incidents over the years. Last year, in a storm, a ship had whipped off its decks tanks and drums of various chemicals and contaminated vegetable oil, some of which landed on a beach in my constituency in Sker. I understand that on that occasion even more of the drums ended up on beaches in north Devon. I am told by the Ogwr borough council, which looks after the coastline of my Bridgend constituency roughly from Sker Point to just beyond Southerndown—another magnificent beach, fortunately not badly polluted—that it has from time to time had oil spillages to deal with along that coastline. Fortunately, they have been minor, but the council's technical officer said that he is always conscious of the threat of a major incident.

There nearly was such an incident at Barry dock recently when a Geest banana boat had an oil discharge within the harbour. It was noticed before the boat sailed and the NRA was able to come along and deal with it, but if the boat had left the harbour there could have been serious contamination of the coast. As the hon. Member for Devon, North pointed out, my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith) has been conscious of the pollution incidents and the need to clean up the coastline of the Bristol channel to enhance tourism and related business, which will help to revive the flagging economies on both sides of the channel.

We must also consider river pollution. In the report to which I have already referred on the Severn estuary, it was pointed out that most of the pollution came through the rivers and the sewage outfalls into the sea. Let us consider

what happened in the rivers on the south Wales side of the coastline. In 1989, 21 km of the Rhymney river were polluted and nearly 20,000 fish were killed.

In 1988, 7 km of the Taff were polluted and 7,000 fish were killed. On the Ebbw, there was a spillage from the Ebbw Vale steelworks. Luckily, the NRA took quick action and neutralised the acids by putting lime in the water and no fish were killed. On the Ely, more than 9,000 fish were killed recently. In the Llwchwr estuary and Swansea bay there has been massive lugworm mortality, probably because of toxic algae. On the Ogmore river, in the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and myself, 30,000 fish were killed a couple of years ago because of the discharge of a chemical into the water. Imagine the impact on the Bristol channel if some of those incidents had taken place much closer to the coast.

The Government are beginning to tackle the problem, but much more needs to be done. More money should be put into anti-pollution measures and dealing better with sewage. Incineration should be a last option, because the use of properly treated sewage on the land, the anaerobic digestion of sewage to produce methane gas and the provision of alternatives to peat should all be explored before incineration is considered. One difficulty with incineration is that it requires critical temperatures in excess of 1200 deg C to be really safe. Even then, there can be dangerously high emissions into the air of substances such as cadmium.

More emphasis should be placed on dealing with pollution. Earlier this year, in proposing some green measures for the Budget, my party suggested a different rate of value added tax for environmentally friendly products. We could stop massive contamination of our rivers by the phosphates in washing powders, and so on, so let us re-examine the corporate tax structure so as to encourage companies not to pollute. The river pollution incidents that I mentioned were the consequence either of poor technology or of carelessness in the way in which technology was applied.

I thank the hon. Member for Devon, North for giving the House an opportunity to debate these issues. Pollution of the Bristol channel is serious and, although the Government are beginning to tackle that problem, there is a considerable way to go. I hope that the Community, through its action in the European Court of Justice, will hasten compliance with the bathing water quality directive, which would have a major impact on overcoming pollution in the Bristol channel.

3.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) for raising this important subject and for his kind comments. He described the situation graphically, sympathetically and clearly, he is a champion of his constituents' interests.

This subject is of concern not only to my hon. Friend's constituents and others living nearby, but to people in all parts of the country who treasure and enjoy our unparalleled coastline and beaches. I welcome this opportunity to tell the House about the substantial improvements in the quality of bathing waters achieved in recent years and of plans for further improvements.

I shall begin with some key facts about our sewerage system and the quality of our rivers and coastal waters compared with those of other countries. Ninety-six per cent. of the United Kingdom's population are connected to the sewer system and 83 per cent. of our sewage is treated. That stands comparison with any country in Europe or in the Community. In 1987, 95 per cent. of river length in the United Kingdom was of good or fair quality compared with 75 per cent. in the Community. No other member state bettered the United Kingdom position.

As my hon. Friend acknowledged, the problem for us lies with discharges of untreated sewage to coastal waters. As the House knows, for a long time it has been our policy to discharge sewage from coastal towns to the sea and to rely on the action of sunlight and salt water to render it harmless. That policy was based on the best scientific advice available at the time that it was adopted.

Starting with the 1959 Jeger report, successive Governments were advised that untreated sewage could safely be discharged to the sea, after prior screening and comminution, through properly designed and located long sea outfalls.

More recently, in 1984, the Royal Commission on environmental pollution, in its tenth report, endorsed that view. Indeed, it concluded that such disposal to sea was often environmentally preferable to alternative methods of disposal on land.

There is no method of disposing of sewage that does not have some environmental cost and impact. Our approach has been to find the best environmental option to suit the particular local circumstances. As I have already said, most sewage is treated before discharge. But this requires a sewage treatment works—not everyone's most popular neighbour, particularly in attractive seaside resorts—and finding a means of disposing of the resulting sewage sludge, whether to agriculture, in landfill sites or by incineration.

For those coastal towns where discharge to sea is the most satisfactory option. the Government, with the water industry, have pressed ahead with a major programme of investment to build well-sited, long sea outfalls to improve the quality of our bathing waters and beaches. Mainly by this means, the proportion of bathing waters complying with the European Community standard has increased from 51 per cent. in 1986 to 77 per cent. in 1990.

However, we believe that it is now time to take a further step forward to improve our standard of sewage disposal. Last year we commissioned a study by consultants into the benefits and costs of treating sewage before discharge to sea. We received a first draft of the report in February this year and we sent a copy to the Environment Select Committee at the same time, to assist it in its investigation into bathing waters. That report showed that, in most cases, there would, on balance, be environmental gains from introducing treatment for coastal discharges.

Within days of receiving that advice the Government acted, and acted decisively. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) announced on 5 March that, in future, all substantial discharges of sewage would be treated. Most would receive secondary treatment, but primary treatment would be more appropriate for coastal discharges, where there was no adverse effect on the environment. I am glad to say that this change of policy has been welcomed both at home and abroad.

Mr. Speller: Does my hon. Friend not realise that the whole problem is that marvellous word "primary" and whether no adverse effects can be proved? I could take him at any time to observe part-treated sewage, which has an adverse effect. We are overloading, because there is only so much water and so much more is going into it. Whereas 10 or 15 years ago, it might have been possible to allow primary treatment alone, now—it really means just chopping the sewage up—it is not the way forward. We shall gain no credit if we use that as our standard.

Mr. Baldry: I hear what my hon. Friend says and I hope that it will reassure him to learn that we have since moved quickly to implement this new policy—we certainly do not intend to stand still—and the National Rivers Authority is now applying it to all new applications for sewage discharge consents. The physical works needed will be expensive and there are complex issues of engineering and planning ahead. We are actively consulting the sewerage undertakers and the various regulatory bodies, in particular the National Rivers Authority and the Office of Water Services.

The sewerage undertakers are now drawing up investment programmes for sewage treatment works for all substantial coastal discharges, in particular to give priority to discharges in the vicinity of bathing waters that fail to meet the directive's standards.

On 14 November, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath announced details of the first stages of the investment programme to treat sewage discharges to coastal waters. About £600 million will be spent over the next five years to improve bathing waters. That is in addition to the £1·4 billion 10-year bathing water compliance programme announced in October 1989.

We estimate the cost of improving our bathing waters and treating all coastal and estuarial sewage discharges at around £3·5 billion. Overall, the water companies plan to spend £12 billion on improving waste water systems and treatment over the next 10 years. That is a massive increase in the funds made available in the past and certainly bears comparison with what was spent by the previous Labour Administration, who succeeded in halving investment on water and massively cut spending on sewage treatment. I do not think that it befits any Labour politician, early in the morning or at any other time, to deliver lectures about investment in water or sewage treatment.

The fact that such enormous funds can now be found to improve the quality of our rivers and coastal waters is attributable to the access to adequate private capital that is now available to water companies as a result of the successful privatisation of the water industry in England and Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Surely the Minister knows that, at the time of the debate on the water privatisation Bill, the issue of investment in the industry was discussed many times. It was only by statistical sleight of hand that the Government produced their figures; the real-terms investment figures show that, although there was a cut in the latter period of the Labour Government, our overall record bears comparison with that of the Conservative Government right up to 1989.

Mr. Baldry: There has been no statistical sleight of hand; the straightforward fact is that the last Labour Government cut investment in water and sewage treatment by some 45 per cent.

The enhanced standards of sewage treatment that we now require are consistent with the proposed directive on municipal waste water treatment, which is under active negotiation in the Council of Ministers. We hope and expect that the directive will be adopted in the next few hours. Our commitment to the directive, and to the early implementation of its requirements, is clear.

The Welsh and Wessex water companies are licensed to dispose of treated sewage sludge in the Bristol channel dumping site about 11 miles north of Ilfracombe, as my hon. Friend has explained. The site is one of the most dispersive in United Kingdom coastal waters and regular monitoring by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has shown no significant impact on the local marine environment. At the end of last month, however, the water companies submitted their proposed programmes for diverting the sludge to alternative outlets on land, in accordance with our commitment—made at the third North sea conference, in March this year—to cease sea disposal as soon as possible. Those submissions are being considered and, as soon as consultations with the companies are completed, details of the national programme will be published. I assure my hon. Friend that that, too, will take place as soon as possible.

The pollution of beaches was recently addressed by the Select Committee on the Environment in its fourth report. One of the issues considered in its wide-ranging and thorough investigation was the evidence concerning the risks to health posed by bathing in sewage-contaminated water. The Committee concluded:

"it is clear that there have been no major outbreaks of serious disease in the United Kingdom associated with sea bathing: and from this we conclude that the risk of contracting such a disease from sea bathing is minimal".

It recommended the continuation of existing research into the relationship between less serious illnesses and bathing.

The Government endorsed that important conclusion in their response to the Committee on 12 December. It lays to rest the more alarmist claims made by some pressure groups, and sensationalised in media reporting. The Government accept that more research is needed into the risks of minor inflammations of the ear, nose and throat and into certain skin irritations and gastro-enteritis. Further research will be commissioned, jointly funded by the Government and the National Rivers Authority.

A further recommendation of the Committee concerned the provision of information on water quality to bathers. The local authority associations have warmly endorsed a proposal by my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) for posters to display easy-to-understand results of monitoring by the NRA at all identified bathing beaches. With the co-operation of the local authorities, the scheme will be in place for the 1991 bathing season.

The blue flag scheme is awarded to beaches that meet the highest standards of cleanliness and management, at which water quality meets European standards and where information on water quality is displayed. This year we have 29 blue flags, but I should like to see many more. Indeed, I should like to see every beach receiving a blue flag. Water quality is not the limiting factor; 345 of our bathing waters met the directive's standards this year. The next step is for local authorities to bring their beaches up to the necessary high standards and apply for a blue flag. My ambition is to see every beach with a blue flag.

Rightly, attention is given to those bathing waters that do not meet European standards. We are taking action to ensure that we make progress as fast as possible. However, as the Prince of Wales reminded us in his recent speech to the Institution of Water and Environmental Management: "Of more than 400 'identified bathing waters' in this country, the majority now do pass the mandatory standards of the European Community directive. This is a real success story and one that deserves more recognition than it has hitherto received."

I very much hope that our success story on bathing water quality will get the recognition it deserves. Let us not forget that over three quarters of our bathing waters already meet European standards. As the House knows, there is a £3 billion investment programme to bring the remainder into compliance. Our commitment to improving water quality is firm and is backed by a record of solid achievement.

Romanian Refugees

3.53 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am delighted to have this opportunity to speak at this hour—just coming up to 4 am. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister for bringing him from his bed at such an hour. However, I hope that he feels that the subject of the debate—British consular assistance to Romanian orphans—is worthy of any of us being out of bed at any hour of the night.

The purpose of my debate is threefold. The first purpose is to draw attention to the continued plight of orphans in Romania. It is some 12 months since we first learned of the horrors in Romania and I am disturbed to learn from current reports that the position is even worse than was at first suspected. Sarah Ball of Granada Television, who has just returned to this country after a further visit to Romania, says that she thinks that there could be nearer 400,000 rather than 200,000 orphans in those terrible orphanages. It is a damning indictment that a state of affairs which existed before the revolution continues to exist today.

My second purpose is to encourage further aid for Romania direct from the Government, to some extent from the European Community, and from all the voluntary groups, charities and non-government agencies that have done so much to provide direct humanitarian aid in Romania.

My third purpose is to encourage couples considering adopting Romanian children—not only those who are relatively healthy, but the handicapped children whose plight is the worst of all.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) is present for this debate, as he intervened in the Adjournment debate that I introduced on 29 October and he has particular points to make about his own constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) also had an Adjournment debate on 15 November on the subject of handicapped children in one of the orphanages.

It is more difficult than it should be to adopt handicapped children in this country, let alone from countries abroad. I recommend that hon. Members read a book by Katherine Macaskill, "Against the Odds", in which she describes the difficulties experienced by couples in this country who wish to adopt handicapped children. They have more success dealing with voluntary agencies than with social services departments of local athorities.

I hope that we shall refer briefly to the plight of children worldwide. The latest report of the United Nations Children's Fund estimates that more than 15 million children die every year. When I was at Harvard university, I had the good fortune to be taught by Professor Roland Christiansen. I remember his stating that, of all the problems that we face, none is worse than the fact that more than 1,000 million people do not get enough to eat every day. Students of Harvard university produce a ranking of their professors twice a year—a practice which we should follow in this country—and Professor Christiansen came top of the rankings year after year. It was a sign of the quality of his teaching that he felt that that was the foremost problem to which we should address ourselves.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

In September, the United Nations produced its convention on the rights of the child, which our then Prime Minister signed on behalf of the United Kingdom. However, there are problems in ratifying the convention —there are plenty of fine words, but I am not sure how much action there is.

I am surprised that the latest report from UNICEF, "The State of the World's Children", makes no mention of Romania. There is a page on the children of eastern and central Europe, but Romania is not mentioned. Given the ghastly situation in Romania, it is extraordinary that the report does not refer to it.

It is one year since the revolution, when we began to discover just how bad things were and found that there was no contraception or abortion available for mothers, who were expected to have five children. I should like to draw the attention of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister to a particularly good article by Judy Dempsey, which appeared in the *Financial Times* on Thursday 29 November. It states:

"Mr. Bogdan Marinescu, Romania's health Minister, is a tired and weary man. As he attempts to secure support for a new health system, fresh obstacles stand in his way almost every day. The greatest one is the miserable legacy bequeathed to the ministry from the Ceausescu regime.

Under that regime, the health system was systematically run down. Mr. Nicolae Ceausescu's attempts to pay off at breakneck speed the country's hard currency debts during the 1980s led to a corresponding decline in public expenditure and investments in the health service.

But the cutback in health spending went beyond a deterioration in services. It undermined the social fabric.

In the early 1980s, women were obliged to have children after the regime embarked on a public campaign to raise the birth rate. Abortion and contraception was banned.

Despite the campaign to raise the birth rate, there were few incentives to facilitate the programme. Food rationing was introduced in 1981, imports were banned and hospitals were starved of investments. As a result, women were often forced to abandon their children in orphanages, or else resort to illegal abortions and risk infection.

Mr. Ceausescu's obsession with increasing the birth rate coincided with a campaign against the medical profession. Doctors and nurses, always under the watchful eye of the hated Securitate, or secret police, were frequently accused of taking bribes, a common practice in eastern Europe because medical staff were so badly paid. And as its public status deteriorated, it failed to attract the younger generation into the profession.

Child care in nurseries, orphanages and paediatric hospitals bore the brunt of a decline in trained personnel. Mr. Marinescu says that explains why today there are 128,000 children in 'Child Protection units.'"—

that is an underestimate according to other reports—

"Of that number, 14,800 children up to the age of three are in orphanages. Another 84,900 children, aged between four and 18 years, and under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Science, are living in orphanages and educational institutions. The Ministry of Labour is entrusted with looking after 23,000 orphaned and handicapped teenagers.

Recent Western visitors to these institutions have been shocked by the conditions. Children were left unfed, unclothed and uncared for in conditions described by western doctors as medieval.

Mr. Marinescu says such neglect was a result of a combination of factors: inexperienced and poorly-paid staff, public indifference, and society's lack of awareness about the true situation. French and British doctors are more critical.

"Romanians tell us they did not know about the situation" said one British doctor. "If they did, they say they could do nothing to improve conditions. The indifference towards the way orphans and handicapped children were treated, and the public stigma attached to handicapped children, was shocking. It seems to me that Romanians were hostile about knowing the truth, he added.

Doctors and health organisations visiting Romania also comment on how medical supplies sometimes find their way into the black market as a result of the continuing shortages; that staff in villages remain suspicious and sometimes obstructive towards outside help. This is hardly surprising. For decades, Romanians were banned from speaking to foreigners.

Mr. Marinescu contends every day with these criticisms. 'The problems are enormous. We have to change the mentality among the population. But to do this, we have to find the resources.'

Helped by the World Health Organisation, the Ministry has started to improve medical services. Progress has been steady but slow, largely due to the bureaucratic inertia, the lack of computers, an untrained medical profession and few resources."

The lack of resources appears to be the most immediate problem. The Health Ministry reckons it requires $1.4 million to repair orphanages; $1.2 million for repairing 10 of the 32 hostels for severely handicapped children (the remainder are not fit for use); another $5.9 million for repairing half of the 49 special education units for deficient children. But a shortage of raw materials delays repairs.

Feeding the children is another problem. In a recent report the Ministry concluded that the state's monthly food budget of $4.6 million for all the childrens' institutions is inadequate. 'The improvement of food would require monthly food imports worth $2 million . . . we do not have the money.'

As for medicines, the monthly bill is $900,000, of which $700,000 is spent on imports. Clothing and accommodation for the winter months will cost an additional $2.4 million.

The government's long-term programme to improve childrens' institutions will cost $100 million, while "in order to attain the targets for the next six months, we need $27 million." But Mr. Marinescu knows that the government's coffers are empty.

A visit to any of the pharmacies in Bucharest confirms this. It is still impossible to buy soap, tampons, penicillin, aspirin, nappies, diapers, sanitary towels, baby food, antiseptics, bandages and condoms.

A visit to any hospital confirms the shortages of personnel and medical equipment. In the meantime, Romanians with money, connections and access to the black market continue to by-pass the queues.

Hence Mr. Marinescu's plea for concerted international assistance. Without such help, he believes that the health system, or the population's mentality, have little chance of changing for the better."

In addition to newspaper reports, we have had several television reports. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to the most dreadful of all the programmes that I have seen—Sky Television's programme on 12 October. It was an unforgettably harrowing video. It showed the orphanages for the handicapped at their worse. They had a death rate of 40 per cent. There were naked children, many horribly deformed, in steel cages. The institutions were behind barbed wire. They were as bad as Auschwitz, except that the people inside were kept alive rather than gassed.

My daughter has just gone over to Romania. I do not know whether she will be able to give me any first-hand accounts of the orphanages. The reports that I have had from her suggest that the Romanian public are kept in ignorance of much of what is happening, so to imagine that the problems can be solved within Romania is clearly to expect more than is possible.

Several voluntary groups from Britain and other countries have gone to Romania to help. It is invidious to mention only a few of them, but the Scottish Flanders Alliance, British Red Cross, the Romanian Orphanage Trust, Mencap, Blue Peter, the Romanian Angels and Save the Children are well-known organisations which have gone there. Also, many local voluntary efforts have

been made. From Bolton, and from Lancashire in general, many people have gone over to Romania. Heating engineers from Somerset have gone to put heating equipment into some of the orphanages.

Many Members of Parliament have been involved in voluntary efforts. My hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Torridge and Devon, West have been actively involved. During the Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West, the Romanian ambassador was here. When I saw him afterwards, he impressed on me that the country needed help from every possible source. Of course, it has been difficult to provide official aid because the regime is so deficient. I shall be interested to hear what my hon. and learned Friend the Minister has to say about the difficulties of providing aid officially, either directly from the Government or through the European Community, to the official regime in Romania, where there are dangers of corruption, inefficiencies and all the other difficulties of organisation.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As the hon. Gentleman knows, I was present for his Adjournment debate on the problems of adopting children from foreign countries and the debate of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson). On both occasions, I mentioned that I have constituents who have adopted the only child from Romania from a mental institution who was classified as mentally handicapped. I sent them copies of the debates. Mr. Smith wrote to me and I should like to quote some of the points made, which are relevant to the points that the hon. Gentleman has developed. My constituent said:

"Harry, please try to understand one of the most important tasks any relief organisation has to do first, and that is to find out who is mentally handicapped and who is just socially deprived, or who has been affected by being in an institution and if they are not mentally handicapped.

I am sending you a copy of a letter that the Sheffield Social Services received from the Department of Health with regards to Emese"——

the girl whom the Smiths have adopted. The letter from the Department when into considerable detail about the medical and mental difficulties that she faces and the impairment which results. Mr. Smith went on:

"Emese is now talking a few words of English and putting words together in just 12 weeks. She is bright healthy and very very happy. The point that I am making, Harry, is that the report the Department of Health has written was based on Emese's medical report from Romania by Romanian doctors only six month ago. Miss Nicholson"——

the hon. Members for Torridge and Devon, West——

"also says that the last psychiatrist trained was in 1972. (I can well believe it)".

It now looks as though Emese may not be suffering from all the mental difficulties that she was assumed to have at the time of adoption. My constituent makes a valid point about the direction that the relief organisations should take in solving the problem.

Mr. Thurnham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. His constituents' case is relevant and I received a copy of their letter from him. I commend his constituents for what they have done in adopting both a handicapped child here and a handicapped child from Romania. Some people say that British couples are adopting in Romania simply because they want healthy children. Most people recognise, however, that many Romanian children are suffering from AIDS, hepatitis and TB as well as being handicapped from birth. One of the worst things is that in Romania handicapped children are regarded as criminals. They are looked after dreadfully and need every possible help that can be given to them.

Mr. Harry Barnes: The hon. Gentleman referred to a book called "Against the Odds" and to the difficulty of adopting mentally handicapped children. People who adopt such children do so against the odds. I received a parliamentary answer saying that Emese is the only such child to have been adopted. The Smiths' qualifications and determination and the support that they received were exceptional. Given all the publicity on television and elsewhere, it is hard to believe that the Smiths are the only qualified parents who have been able to adopt a child. There must have been many other appropriate couples who started on the road to adoption but could not overcome the problem of officialdom here and in Romania.

Mr. Thurnham: I mentioned that to Baroness Faithfull, the chairman of the all-party group for children, the other day. She believes that she knows of other cases. The problem is that no one really knows what is going on. A number of children are being brought in without the procedures being followed because of the delays experienced by those trying to observe the procedures who are running into all sorts of red tape and delays. Given the dreadful circumstances of children in Romania, it is a natural humanitarian response for people to wish to adopt them. The National Association for the Childless has received more than 5,000 requests for further information.

The United Nations declaration states that the first objective for every child should be to stay with its parents. If that is not possible, it should be possible to make other arrangements within the country of the child's birth. Inter-country adoption should be looked at only as the last possibility, when the other two have been fully explored. Most people would accept that order of priorities. But given the desperate straits of children in Romania and in other countries where children are dying, it is difficult to say that it is in the interests of the child to follow an enormously lengthy procedure. Some parents say that they have been treated like criminals while trying to follow all the procedures. Fourteen parents came to me with a petition, which I took to Downing street in July, concerning problems that they were facing not only with the local authority social services departments, but with the Home Office, the Foreign Office and the Department of Health. I helped that group of parents to set up the Campaign for Inter-Country Adoption, led by Barbara Mostyn, formerly of the Association for the Childless.

I have received numerous letters and shall refer to a few of them. I received a letter dated 10 December from Mr. and Mrs. Parsons, who live in Dorset, referring to difficulties in Romania. It says:

"The point has been made many times, but bears much repeating, that if the British Authorities could have been more helpful, responsive and consistent, all adoptive couples would readily accept 2-4 weeks' delay. It is the indeterminate and uncertain time that causes the distress. The new Vice Consul in Bucharest has arbitrarily and without warning introduced new papers and requirements, which were not in place a few weeks ago. It is both unreasonable to do this without warning, but also demonstrates why there is a well founded perception that the British Authorities are particularly difficult."

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will be able to reply to points such as those.

[Mr. Thurnham]

My hon. and learned Friend will be aware that a case is being brought against the Government by Mr. and Mrs. Luff, who, although approved by their local social services, were turned down by the Department of Health because of a previous heart condition of Mr. Luff, although he claims that he is now perfectly healthy and able to bring up a child. When one considers that couples here can have a child naturally without having to have Department of Health approval, one wonders whether some of these procedures are so necessary when we are dealing with children who would otherwise be likely to die in Romania. One must acknowledge that there are difficulties.

My hon. Friend may be aware of the case of the Stewarts from Chelmsford in Essex. Mrs. Stewart went to Romania and adopted a child according to Romanian law while her husband, who had remained in this country, unfortunately fell ill and died. She is staying in Romania while she endeavours to get entry clearance to come back with the child. Her sister has gone out to Romania to help her and taken her child out there. The family are therefore in considerable confusion, with half of them in Romania and half of them here trying to get permission for Mrs. Stewart to come back with her child.

I received a long letter from Mrs. Marriott, who, with her husband, has been involved with the Campaign for Inter-Country Adoption, and wrote a three-page letter to my hon. Friend the Minister for Health. I shall refer to that letter because it is based on their experience in Romania and their heartfelt feelings. It states:

"My husband Ian and I run a help and advice line for people attempting to do what we have done, and we have produced a factsheet which has been sent to in excess of 500 couples. A lot of these people get no further than reading and binning it. You need to be of tough material to actually achieve Romanian adoption. The process is long and complicated and designed to deter. However, at least one hundred people we have had dealings with either have achieved it or are in the process of doing so. I know I also speak for most of these people.

There are a number of points I wish to make. I understand that you are initiating, or are in the process of initiating, a fact finding tour of Romanian orphanages. I can only hope that the people who undertake this mission go to the more obscure and out of the way orphanages. The chances are your people will be shown around the showcase ones, or possibly the buildings that the Romanian Orphanage Trust are working in. These places are not a true representation. I believe your attention has been drawn to Sky TV's documentary video of the mentally handicapped orphanages. These children are treated the worst because of what they are, or, I should say, because of what they have been forced to become. There are many, many orphanages just like those shown all over Romania. If you really want to know what it's like, may I suggest you speak to the aid workers and convoy drivers who have spent time there. People like Anne Alcock—Lancashire's "Woman of the Year", who has put her finger right on it when she describes these places as "Auschwitz for Children". People such as Sarah Ball, one of Granada TV's "This Morning" production team, who has more horror film footage than can be described and admits that she is now obsessed with trying to help these children. Both these women would like to help keep the children in their own country, but confess that this is not a feasible proposition.

Romania's problems are insurmountable in the near future. They are generations away from getting it right. Romanians' future is at home with their parents. The Orphanages (the Romanians call them "Houses of the Children") contain Romanians' past or their scrapheap—unloved, uncared for, very often tortured children who have no future in their own country. Their only hope is overseas adoption, not all of them of course. The estimate that I have is that 400,000 children are in these places throughout Romania. Very few people would want to have a 16 year old physically or mentally handicapped child with Aids, hepatitis B and TB. The actual numbers available for adoption are unknown but what is very apparent is that the healthy children available should be got out while they are still healthy, and certainly before they are three years old, to allow the aid to go where it is most desperately needed, to those who can never escape. This sounds melodramatic I know, but believe me, I am not over-dramatising. The nurses in these places are, for the most part, uneducated peasant women. Cruelty begets cruelty. They have so little themselves, and are expected to raise large families with virtually no money. The pittance that they get for looking after these children does not inspire them to take any care of them. Potty training usually consists of being beaten with a stick. Children are lifted out of their cots by their arms and legs, that's when they are lifted out at all. Babies are changed once a day, with a rag, not a nappy, if they are lucky. I know from first hand experience that even in the better run orphanages, they are only changed when some prospective adopter wants to hold them. One child I saw had 90 per cent. urine burns from shoulder to ankle because she had not been changed for so long. One 16 month old boy (again from first hand experience) was fed twice a day, four ounces of milk at 10 o'clock, four ounces at five o'clock. I could continue giving you these horror stories but that is not the purpose of this letter. This sort of treatment goes on in every orphanage throughout Romania. All the people who we have helped have kept in touch and told us their experiences. It is not an exaggeration to say that these are concentration camp-like conditions and that it is not just Romania's problem, but humanity's.

The orphanage directors themselves estimate that 25 per cent. of the children in hospital will die this winter, and 50 per cent. of the orphanage children. One couple who had waited for months to get entry clearance arrived in Romania last week, with all their completed documents to discover that their child had died of pneumonia three days before. I believe that the Romanian courts will close for Christmas recess from 20 December and will not begin again until mid-January. The Romanian Government have decreed that as from January, the 15 day cooling off period will be extended to 30 days to allow all involved parties even longer to change their minds.

In effect that means that unless prospective parents can get to court by 19 December the earliest they can hope to get their child out is mid-February but probably, in reality, the spring. This has led to a number of near hysterical people phoning me asking what on earth they can do as they cannot risk their child's life in this way. My answer has had to be "nothing". I ask you to think seriously about the fact that a number of respectable law abiding people have been quite simply forced into breaking the law to protect their child. Surely this indicates that the law needs looking at? "The law is an ass" may well apply here. You are a parent and you don't need me to tell you how protective you feel toward your children. If it was a matter of breaking the law to save his or her life, would you even think twice about it?

A number of families will be split this Christmas. The women are making arrangements to spend the next three months in Romania and getting the guardianship of their children rather than risk their not being there next spring. Their husbands of course have to stay in the United Kingdom to finance it, on occasions doing the nappy and milk run as these commodities are not available in Romania . . .

With very little effort on the Government's part this whole tragic business could end. If Susan Hodgettes in Bucharest could be authorised to give entry certificates to people who have handed over all the necessary documents for clearance, these families could possibly get their court dates before 19 December. One telephone call could result in a number of people getting home before Christmas. These people feel that they are as much hostages as any to be found in Iraq.

Moving on to the whole process of entry clearance, and the home studies required for them, I have heard and read on more occasions than I care to remember the phrase "the best interest of the child is paramount". On the basis of this letter so far, are the child's best interests served by being assessed for mental competence at age three? i.e. are they potty trained, can they walk, talk and feed themselves, when they have never been out of a cot (often shared by so many other children that

their limbs are deformed) and therefore cannot walk or use a toilet when they have had no stimulation and cannot therefore talk and their food has always been given through a bottle and they cannot therefore feed themselves? Are the children's best interests served by leaving them open to Aids, hepatitis B, TB, pneumonia, malnutrition, hypothermia, etc? This list is endless. People who go through mainly to adopt take with them a home study completed by a qualified and experienced social worker who is possibly a private social worker. Social Services insist and the home office appears to agree that the only competent social workers are employed by Social Service. Many other people disagree. They have police reports and medicals. They have proven themselves perfectly acceptable as adopted parents. Yet because the report has not been done by the Social Services this Government will not allow an entry clearance certificate. Is this really in the best interests of the children. Maybe—and I happen to think that this is remote—there are people who adopt from Romania for all the wrong reasons. In an ideal world, it would be absolutely right that parents are carefully vetted, assessed, and counselled. Romanian children are not living in an ideal world. Better in 30 years for a grown man to say to his adopted parents "You adopted me for all the wrong reasons" but (a) he grew to manhood to be able to say it; and (b) has developed mentally, emotionally and intellectually to be able to articulate it.

If there were cases where children from Romania had to be taken into care, (and if I may say here, that the Social Services who continually point out that they should have a say in the adoption process simply because they have to pick up the pieces when things go wrong, are nit-picking. They have to do that for everyone, it is their job. You don't see social workers doing in-depth reports on couples wanting to have natural families, because they have to pick up the pieces when things go wrong!) I do not believe they would be in care very long. There are approximately 250,000 people wanting to adopt very young children and only about 1,500 babies available each year. Logic says, these children would be snapped up. I have had so many letters from people who ask the cost involved in Romanian adoptions, because even though they have very little money, they could offer a secure, loving home to one of these tragic children. I am paraphrasing, but it is practically word for word from dozens of letters I have received. Let's just take the worst case scenario, maybe a half dozen children would never be placed, and will remain in care for the rest of their childhood . . . Why should the majority of excellent prospective adopters be penalised because of the possibility (and it is only that, there are no proven cases that I have heard of) of some couples proving unsuitable?

My last point, and quite an important one I feel, is that we in Britain are imposing our 20th century morals, values and standards on to a population who are at best Dickensian, and in my view more a medieval people. Life is very cheap in Romania. *The Guardian* a few weeks ago (13 November) ran an article which was quite honestly ludicrous, as anyone who has ever been to Romania recognises. When are we going to see not through our own eyes, but through the eyes of the peoples concerned that they don't want these babies? Very few, if any at all, mothers will be distressed in 30 years time. It is possible she will be hard put to remember that she had a child at all. These children are dragging the women down, and when you are at rock bottom, that is an impossible situation. Of course, this isn't true of all the women in Romania, but the fact that 400,000 children have been abandoned in this way speaks volumes for the majority of motherhood.

I have no axe to grind. My two adopted Romanian babies are upstairs asleep in their cots. They are safe, secure, healthy, adored and happy. I am not an hysterical neurotic woman. I am not asking you to relax the immigration regulations for these children, I am begging you. Believe me, the floodgates will not open. There will not be 2 or 3 million people rushing off to bring a child into Britain."

That was the letter from Mrs. Marriott dated 4 December 1990. I have already raised with my hon. and learned Friend the Minister some of the points in that letter. I am pleased to see that one of the voluntary agencies in Britain, Childlink, proposes to set up an international resource centre to provide at least a helpline and information service to couples who wish to adopt. I hope that the Government will help to fund that and encourage voluntary donations towards the cost. Childlink has already undertaken to carry out home studies for some local authorities and quoted a cost of £2,500, which is higher than most people had had previously. I hope that most local authorities will feel that they do not always need to pass on those costs, so that couples who are not able to pay such high fees can still consider adopting children from Romania and elsewhere.

My hon. and learned Friend the Minister may be aware of early-day motion 168 on handicapped Romanian orphans. I am pleased to say that there are now 46 signatures to that motion. There was an amendment in the name of the hon. Minister for Eccles (Miss Lestor), in which she states that

"Romania can care for its future rather than having children adopted abroad"

Only one hon. Member has signed the amendment and I do not think that it reflects the feelings of the public or of most hon. Members.

I hope that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister will consider the Hague conference, which is to be held in 1993, on inter-country adoption. I hope that we shall play a full part, although we are the only leading western country not to have an agency or organisation that will help with inter-country adoption. We need to have much better facilities to help people who, for the best of reasons, wish to provide children who would otherwise die with a secure and loving home, in place of those desperate orphanages where the children are denied any human contact.

I am glad that we have been able to have this debate to draw attention to the plight of children in need all round the world as well as in Romania. The wish of the British people to supply humanitarian aid to Romania and to offer adoption is a good response, but the adoption should be done properly. The baby should come into this country through the front rather than the back door. Half the children who have come from Romania have come through the back door, but all should come through the front door. I hope that the Government and as many other people as possible will give resources so that an international resource centre can be set up through the agency of Childlink, so that things can be done properly and help can be provided in the best possible way.

4.31 am

Mr George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr Thurnham) on obtaining a place in the debate. We know that he is assiduous and sincere in pursuing the issue. I am not so delighted that the debate is taking place at this hour of the morning. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr Robertson) said earlier, and it applies even more now, that to have debates at such an hour is a primitive, unproductive and uncivilised way to conduct the affairs of Parliament. I hope that eventually we shall grasp the nettle of reform and start having all our debates at a civilised hour.

When I say "a civilised hour", I mean an earlier hour, because it is not always a civilised debate. The Minister and I have often clashed across the Chamber. Little did we know that we might be in greater agreement at this early hour of the morning. We shall see.

I think that we all share the concern and the horror of the situation described by the hon. Member for Bolton,

[Mr George Foulkes]

North-East. We were all appalled at the revelations of the terror and barbarity of the Ceausescu regime, including the aspect that has created the problem to which the hon. Member referred—the use of women as breeding machines, in some case to produce programmed people for the Securitate. We are also concerned about the plight of those who are described as orphans. Many of them, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, still have live parents. Perhaps more than 80 per cent. of those described as orphans still have parents, although living in poor circumstances. We must take account of that when considering how to deal with the matter.

I know that the plight of these children has touched the hearts of many people, particularly in the United Kingdom, and many have risen to the challenge of trying to help in many ways. The hon. Gentleman mentioned hon. Members on both sides of the House who had taken a particular interest in this, and the media, television and the general public have all taken an interest. I was made aware of the way that "Blue Peter" has got the message across when last Friday I saw five, six and seven-year-olds in Bellsbank primary school in Dolmellington in my constituency. It is one of the poorest areas in what is a relatively poor constituency compared with those of many Conservative Members.

The arrangements had been made by "Blue Peter" and the children had been organised by the school. That shows how far interest in Romanian children has extended. We must all be concerned about the terrible plight of the children—there is no difference between us on that—but we should remember that our first priority must be to help children to be able to remain in their own country. Perhaps that was not stressed strongly by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East. We should not attempt to whisk them away from their country to a strange one.

The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East may have read an article in *The Observer* last Sunday that described some of the work being done to enable Romanian children to remain in their own country by raising money for projects in Romania. Part of the article read:

> "The idea of flying out to adopt a child and bring it back is not always tempered with the realisation that many of them still have parents who want to keep in touch with their children."

That must be taken into account. The article then describes some of the work that is being done. Greater emphasis should be placed on that by the Romanian Orphanage Trust and the many other organisations to enable them to raise money to keep Romanian children in Romania in better circumstances than the appalling ones described by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman has rightly drawn attention to the need to do everything possible in Romania. The death rate is high in that country and the risk to the health of the children who do not die immediately is a real one. If a few children are adopted here, it will enable more help to be given to the children who remain. Only relatively few will be adopted here. Obviously the majority will be there. If a few children come to this country, fewer will have to use the limited resources that are available in Romania.

Mr. Foulkes: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says.

The frustration that is felt by the hon. Gentleman and those like him, some of whom he quoted, is understandable. It is the result of impatience and genuine compassion. We appreciate that. It is essential, however, for the long-term good of the children that the proper procedures are followed and accepted. They are designed to protect the interests of the child and that is our top priority.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that the rules for adoption should be no less stringent in Romania than in the United Kingdom. We know that the adoption procedures here can be a lengthy process. Bearing in mind the possible dangers and the long-term implications of uprooting a young child from its country and the culture of its birth, there is extra justification for full and thorough examination of each case. Various procedures must be followed.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Home Office has to agree to allow the child in. Before entry clearance is granted, various things have to be checked. It has to be clear, for example, that a complete transfer of parental responsibility from the child's parents to the intending adopters has already taken place or is genuinely intended to take place. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that must be tested, clarified and confirmed. If it is not, difficulties will arise.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman is in danger of slight over-simplification. In this country, so few children are available for adoption that sometimes criteria can be used that I think are not necessary when considering the plight of the children in Romania.

For instance, is it right that the age of 35 should be used as a strict cut-off for couples who wish to adopt? Is it right that if a couple who wish to adopt have a dog, they will not be allowed to adopt? Those criteria are used in this country where few children are available for adoption and many people wish to adopt. The hon. Gentleman is over-simplifying the case by saying that everything should be done according to the procedures.

Mr. Foulkes: I thought that I was over-complicating the case, but I accept that I might have been over-simplifying it. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is a review of adoption procedures, including inter-country adoption. I presume that he is making those points to the review. I believe that all Departments are involved in it. If it is appropriate to have different criteria—I am not saying more liberal criteria—for inter-country adoption, that point can be made to the review.

There is an argument for scrupulous examination of those who wish to adopt. The children from Romania are bound to face further hurdles as they grow up. We all agree that their interests are paramount and we do not wish to risk harming them with misplaced kindness if we cut corners. What some genuine, well-meaning couples may view as heartless bureaucracy can, in reality, be something put in place to protect the children.

There is a case in my constituency—not related to inter-country adoption, but to adoption within the United Kingdom—of a natural mother who has changed her mind. The adoption procedures have been completed, so it is a fait accompli. People do change their minds, so it is important that the procedures are followed to ensure that there is a genuine desire, acceptance and a concurrence by

the natural parents that an adoption should take place. If they change their minds, it is only after they have had many opportunities to consider and reconsider.

The hon. Gentleman, rather than reading from so many letters, might have said more about Foreign Office responsibility. Much of what he said related to other Departments, especially the Department of Health and the Home Office. I shall touch on the Foreign Office aspects as I am an Opposition Foreign Office spokesman, and a Foreign Office Minister is to reply to the debate. I do not want unduly to criticise the Foreign Office. I love to do it when there are good reasons for doing so, but I do not want to do it without reason. The embassy in Bucharest must be facing many problems and be very stretched. We must bear in mind all the other matters for which it has responsibility.

We welcome the appointment of a new vice-consul with particular responsibility for adoption. Although we believe that the correct procedure must be fully adhered to, it is equally important that no unnecessary obstacles are placed in the way of those who seek to adopt. It is the role of British diplomats in Romania to help people who wish to give a home to those children and not deliberately to discourage them without good reason.

We recognise that the Foreign Office is not an adoption agency, as one vice-consul was quoted as saying. The need for comprehensive regulations makes all the greater the need for constructive and helpful guidance for couples to find their way through the complicated but necessary paperwork. Patience is needed on both sides. What can be done is to improve co-operation between our officials and the Romanian authorities. We hope that recent parliamentary and governmental delegations to Romania to examine the problem will result in some constructive suggestions.

To strike a cautionary note, on 8 November *The Times* said:

> "Whitehall officials are counting the days before a Romanian mother alleges that her child has been stolen by a British couple".

That is a real and genuine fear among officials. The media have been active in putting one point of view forcefully and effectively and they might sensationalise things in a rather different way if such a situation arose. The Foreign Office and other officials concerned must take that into account.

Mr. Thurnham: Fears of baby trafficking, which have been the cause of Britain not having an inter-country adoption service, should not stand in the way of those couples who genuinely wish to help. There may be isolated cases of such trafficking, but they should not be used as a reason for not doing anything to help the vast majority of couples who wish to help for the best of reasons.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman has been genuinely helpful to me because I am about to come to that point. Before I do, I should say that there is a balance to be struck between those who believe that adoption should be used to assist childless couples whose only hope of parenthood is a baby from overseas—whose case the hon. Gentleman seemed to be arguing strongly—and those whose rigorous professional vetting of couples is seen as a barrier to adoption.

The last thing that we all want is these poor children treated as some commercial commodity, which is what the hon. Gentleman was just referring to. This is not just a scare; it is a real danger. Stories of children being sold and traded and brought in illegally are most disturbing. This must not be allowed to happen. It is an undesirable and evil trade.

For some time now my colleagues and I have been concerned about the growing illegal trade in babies and small children—the result of parents living in appalling poverty and manipulated by greedy entrepreneurs who have spotted an expanding market. My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) has raised that matter particularly.

Only last month two women from a South American country arrived at a European airport with three small babies, one of whom died en route from dehydration and malnutrition. Those babies were on offer to European would-be parents for adoption. I am told that the going rate for the purchase of such a baby averages £10,000.

That is an evil trade which must be stamped out and the hon. Gentleman must remember that, although, as he said, only a small number of people is involved, and they are in no way representative of the vast majority that he described, it is something about which we must be cautious. It makes it more important that Britain at least plays it by the book. A blind eye must not be turned to illegal entries, which must be stopped if huge problems are not to be stored up for the future. Children abandoned because of poverty in Romania should not become teenagers left in care in Britain because they were illegally adopted by unsuitable parents.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that a large majority of the children are not orphans. Many were abandoned simply because of the great poverty that the hon. Gentleman described. That forces us to recognise the root cause of the problem in Romania and to realise that, just as those children are innocent victims, so are their natural parents. That has implications for the adoption procedures. It is necessary to find parents and to explain the situation to them. It also makes long-term adjustment more difficult for the children, knowing that they were reluctantly surrendered by the real parents. That makes it essential that, if they are adopted, they are with the best possible people.

I emphasise that there is sympathy with would-be adopters, most of whom are obviously well-intentioned, compassionate people. Also, there is sympathy among Opposition Members for the hon. Gentlemen's sentiments. The question is not whether to help the children, but what is the best way to do so. Emotional issues must be put to one side in the long-term interests of the child.

Various Government Departments are examining that issue as part of their review of adoption and the kind of hands-on policy now publicly advocated must continue. We must not allow a laissez-faire approach to develop once the children actually arrive. The problem is not confined to Romania. There is the much broader issue of inter-country adoption, as the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East said. While we sympathise with his position to the extent that adopting children from other countries may be the best solution in individual cases, one must question what sort of countries are prepared to give up the children who are their future. In reality, it is countries experiencing great poverty which are forced to do that. We should help them to develop their economies and eliminate that poverty, and to ensure that they will be able to offer their children a secure and positive future.

4.50 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) deserves congratulations on bringing to the attention of the House a subject to which so many right hon. and hon. Members and their constituents have devoted some time. It is particularly apt that he should have done so this week, almost exactly one year after the dictator Ceausescu was overthrown by an explosion of outrage from the Romanian people, for Ceausescu was in large part to blame for the plight of Romanian children.

Numbers have been discussed. We believe that between 125,000 and 140,000 children aged up to 18 are in children's homes, residential schools, hospitals and other institutions throughout Romania. They are in most cases the innocent victims of Ceausescu's inhuman policies, the effects of which were described by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I shall not repeat what has been said, but it is important to remind oneself of the disastrous results of Ceausescu's attempt at wholesale social engineering. Had he not tried to force all married Romanian women of childbearing age to have five children, regardless of their wishes or circumstances, today there would not perhaps be thousands of children abandoned, or at least temporarily lost, by parents who could not afford to look after them.

When conditions in the Romanian institutions were revealed earlier this year, we were all profoundly shocked by what we saw—undernourished and neglected boys and girls living in filthy, overcrowded buildings, lacking even the basic necessities of heating, sanitation, proper food and decent clothing. I shall describe shortly what has been done to help them.

As my hon. Friend takes a particularly close interest in adoption, I shall first outline what we are doing in that respect. It is understandable that many couples in Britain, where the number of babies available for adoption has fallen sharply in recent years, want to adopt a child from overseas. Their wishes can only have been intensified by knowledge of conditions in Romania. I want to make quite clear at the outset that all British Government Departments concerned—notably the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office, and Department of Health—are committed to helping all suitably qualified couples, provided that they follow the essential requirements of both Romania and the United Kingdom, to adopt from Romania without unnecessary bureaucracy and as quickly as possible, consistent with the overriding obligations upon us to make sure that the best interests of the child are always uppermost.

My hon. Friend will appreciate that the procedures that prospective adopters need to follow exist to protect the children's welfare. Children adopted overseas should be afforded no less protection than children adopted in Britain. It would be entirely wrong if a child could be brought here from abroad for adoption without proper inquiries being made both into the child's circumstances abroad and the background of the prospective adopters in this country. Otherwise, there would clearly be scope for serious abuse. I am sure that the House is with me when I say that we must remain vigilant for the sake of the children's welfare.

The checks that I have spoken of take time. With the best will in the world, they cannot be completed in a few days. But we know that conditions can be poor in Romania and we sympathise with couples who wish to adopt. That is why all the Government Departments concerned do their best to operate the process as quickly as possible. Most entry clearance applications in respect of Romanian children have been decided within four to seven weeks—which is far quicker than it usually takes to adopt a child in Britain.

Since last December, the British embassy in Bucharest has been inundated with applications, not just for entry clearance for children for adoption, but for visa work of all sorts. Our staff there have done their best to cope in difficult circumstances. Inevitably, there have been some whose cases have not been dealt with quite as quickly as one would have liked. However, we have sent out more British staff to handle the extra work and we are monitoring progress constantly to check whether more needs to be done.

A team of officials from the Home Office and the Department of Health visited Bucharest in November to discuss with the Romanian authorities how to mesh our two countries' adoption procedures together. The Romanian side confirmed their willingness to approve adoptions by British couples, if it is in the best interests of the children, and where couples are prepared to observe the requirements of both countries. The Ministry of Justice and senior Romanian judges made it clear that they regard our procedures as the best among the countries with which they deal. If a British couple secure entry clearance, the Romanian authorities can be confident that they can be trusted to look after a Romanian child properly, because there will have been a thorough investigation.

As a result of the visit, a revised leaflet will be produced early in the new year setting out up-to-date and comprehensive details of the procedure which needs to be followed. I hope that it will help to clear up some of the difficulties that prospective adopters have had.

We should not confuse adoption with the rather different problem—although they are related—of how conditions for abandoned Romanian children can be improved.

Mr. Thurnham: Before we leave the subject of adoption, I think it right to say that couples who wish to adopt should be given the maximum amount of counselling, advice and help in the early stages, while they are considering whether it is the right course. If time is required, that is when it is most important that the procedures are used as fully as possible. Having got through that stage, the process should move more rapidly, and when the couple have identified a child, delays should be kept to a minimum. It is important that the maximum amount of counselling and advice should be given in the early stages so that the number of people who change their mind—as in the example quoted by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes)—is kept to a minimum and people know their mind at an early stage. They need as much help as possible at the beginning of the process, so that when they get to Romania, things can go smoothly and they will not be tempted to bypass procedures. We want children to come to this country by following the procedures and we do not want to offer any temptation for people to bypass them.

Mr. Hogg: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, but I do not think that it is for the Foreign Office to provide any such counselling—whatever else we may be, we are not an adoption agency.

The other problem is how conditions for abandoned children can be improved. As soon as we became aware of Romania's pressing needs a year ago, the British Government acted quickly to send humanitarian aid. We sent emergency medical supplies at once and contributed to two European Community packages of medical aid and food. We funded a family planning programme, helped British charities to aid children's homes and donated £500,000 to the World Health Organisation, which at our request spent most of it on care for newborn babies and children. We donated contraceptives and HIV diagnostic equipment, and in total sent humanitarian aid worth about £6.5 million. However, the needs of children's homes and other institutions caring for abandoned children are particularly pressing, so we are especially pleased to be associated with the major programme that the European Community now has under way to alleviate conditions in Romania.

This programme has been running for several weeks already. The first moves were to send milk and enriched flour for infants and provide food, blankets, medicines, medical equipment and training for the care of handicapped children. The Community then agreed with the Prime Minister of Romania to help fund a crash programme to repair, run and improve heating equipment in the institutions before the onset of winter. The programme is helping to pay for the work of the Save the Children Fund and several other European charities active in Romania.

In the slightly longer term the institutions will be comprehensively repaired and improved and Romanian staff will be trained in how to look after the children in their care. Apart from the funds raised by the sale of EC food aid to Romania earlier this year, which the Community has agreed may be used for this programme, the Community has already committed over £9 million of new money, with the promise of more to come. We strongly support this excellent programme, which will help greatly to improve the quality of life for the children concerned.

The international effort is not restricted to the EC. I understand, for example, that UNICEF will open an office in Bucharest in January to run a special two-year emergency programme for institutionalised children. There will be wide range of activities, starting with essentials such as the supply of vaccines and the meeting of other needs.

The Romanian Government themselves have pledged to do what they can with the limited resources available to them. The Prime Minister, Mr. Roman, has ordered the Romanian army to help with the urgent task of repairing and improving heating equipment. A state secretariat has been set up—headed by the equivalent of a Minister—to work with the Community, UNICEF and others to look after abandoned children, orphans, the mentally handicapped and others who, for one reason or another, cannot look after themselves.

I must also pay tribute to the host of unofficial efforts to respond to Romania's needs. The response of the British public alone has been magnificent. Scores of charities, large and small, have been created to help Romania or have turned existing efforts in that direction —the Romanian Orphanage Trust and Bristol Mencap are just two of such charities. Scores of British men and women are now in Romania, giving freely of their time and energy to improve conditions there. Thousands of people in Britain are involved in raising money for food, medical care, clothing and other essentials. The Romania information centre at the university of Southampton is playing a valuable role in co-ordinating the activities of aid groups all over Britain.

A development at last week's European Council in Rome, while not aimed exclusively at helping children in Romania, will certainly be of great benefit to them. The council decided on emergency food and medical aid for Romania and Bulgaria totalling about £70 million, and some of that will undoubtedly make its way to institutionalised children.

I am under no illusion that the measures that I have outlined will suffice to solve the problems that Romania has inherited in their entirety. In the long term—as the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said—Romania needs to create, through economic reform and reconstruction, the wealth to improve the quality of life for her children, and indeed all her citizens. The Romanian Government, under Mr. Roman, have made encouraging progress in that direction, although there is a long way to go.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising this subject. I have set out briefly some of the ways in which Britain and the international community are moving to respond to the humanitarian crisis in Romania; I have also explained what the Government are doing to assist British couples seeking to adopt children from Romania. I hope that, in so doing, I have gone some way towards answering my hon. Friend's concerns.

Electricity Supply (East Midlands)

5.2 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I find myself caught in rather a cleft stick in these Consolidated Fund debates. I really wanted to speak in the previous debate, about Romanian orphans, but, because of our procedures, I could not do so, and had to be content with intervening, as I have done in similar debates. When I managed to make a speech earlier in the Christmas Adjournment debate, I was "squeezed out" for reasons of time. Perhaps I shall be able to knit the bits and pieces together on some future occasion.

In the current debate, however, I am concerned about the consequences of the severe weather suffered recently by the east midlands and about what is to be done if similar circumstances arise in the future. The severe weather started on the evening of Friday 7 December and there was adequate warning. That did not apply to the gale warnings issued in the south of England in 1987, to which I may refer later. Conditions deteriorated rapidly in my area between 10 o'clock on Friday evening and 3 o'clock on Saturday morning. The results were devastating. Electricity supplies in the east midlands area were disrupted from 3 am onwards. Councillor Betty Long, who lives in the Killamarsh area, informed me about the conditions there. The electricity supplies from the Westhorpe substation were disrupted. Three 33,000 kV cables came down. If one of them had remained intact, electricity supplies could have been maintained.

Supplies were disrupted throughout the entire east midlands area. The results were devastating in north Derbyshire and north Nottinghamshire. Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire also suffered badly. Water supplies were cut off in many areas because of the failure of electricity supplies at the pumping stations. There were no emergency generators. Action was taken to obtain generators. Eventually help was obtained from the Army. It was difficult at first to reach remote areas where electricity cables had come down.

I first became aware of the extent of the problem when I rose early that morning. I had hoped to hold a constituency surgery in Chesterfield at 10 am, but it had to be cancelled because electricity supplies had failed in the area. Moreover, because of the bad weather conditions, I could not have reached the surgery in time. I switched on the radio and tuned in to Radio Sheffield, as everybody else in the area did. Its community service came very much into its own at that time. That must also be true of the local radio stations elsewhere in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.

I received a letter from Chris van Schaick, the programme organiser for Radio Sheffield. He explained what conditions were like four days into the crisis. He said:

"Over the weekend and yesterday Radio Sheffield abandoned its normal schedule to provide a special weather service. Our phone-in lines have not stopped ringing since the crisis began. The utilities have been asking people to report their problems on air because their own staff have been listening to us to find out where the worst problems are. The station has broadcast a total of nearly 80 hours of programmes on the crisis since Saturday morning."

People would have been in desperate trouble if that information had not been made available to them. However, it was only available to those who were lucky enough to have battery-operated radios. However, information was relayed to communities and people were kept informed of developments.

I was one of those who ventured out that Saturday, although, quite correctly, people were being advised not to do so unless their journeys were absolutely necessary. The opportunity for politicians to appear on television probably makes their journey absolutely necessary. I went to Leeds television studio. I make that point because on my journey I was able to observe the difference in conditions in north Derbyshire and Leeds.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): May I associate myself and agree with the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the magnificent service that was provided by the local broadcasting networks? He mentioned Radio Sheffield. It should be placed on record that Radio Nottingham and Radio Trent, which cover the area represented by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and myself, did a first-class job providing the community service that he mentioned.

Mr. Barnes: Given the resources that are available, BBC local radio offers a great service to communities, especially in such emergencies, when people automatically rely on public service provision.

Travelling between north Derbyshire and Leeds, I discovered that north Derbyshire was affected far more than other areas. Sheffield was bad, but was a slight improvement on north Derbyshire. Some areas between Sheffield and Leeds were quite mild. Leeds and the areas surrounding it were in trouble, but they were not as bad as those in Sheffield, and neither of those places experienced conditions as bad those in as north Derbyshire.

The area covered by Yorkshire Electricity was less seriously affected than that covered by East Midlands Electricity. That is not to say that Yorkshire was not badly affected; cables were down and it experienced faults with low voltage provision, but the position was considerably worse in north Derbyshire, north Nottinghamshire and large areas of the midlands. That is borne out by the fact that, as late as 12 December, the Leader of the House, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), pointed out that 43,000 customers were waiting for their service to be reconnected, 39,500 of them in the east midlands area. That shows the scale of the problem. It took longer to deal with, because conditions were often far worse.

Snow and ice were adhering to washing lines, to fences round farms and to cables. Falling trees were bringing down cables and pylons were collapsing. Conditions were so bad that linesmen in the Chatsworth area were unable to get out. Appeals were being made on the radio to notify the electricity authorities of where cables were down. East Midlands Electricity received a bad press because its reconnection times compared unfavourably with those in the Yorkshire area. In some areas, reconnection was made impossible by the conditions.

When I returned from Leeds, I was aware of the scale of the problem and was in regular touch with the electricity board. Over that weeekend, I contacted the Department of Energy about emergency action and Labour energy spokesmen about the devastating situation.

What was required all along was a statement from the Government, issued through the Department of Energy,

recognising the extent of the emergency and demonstrating to people that they were using all their resources to assist in handling it. That statement was never made.

I also issued a press release that illustrated the strength of my feelings. It appeared in the *Yorkshire Post* and stated:

"I am very concerned about the delay, particularly by the Department of Energy, in co-ordinating a repair and rescue programme.

It has been largely left to the individual electricity boards to sort out and it should have been a nationally organised operation.

Up to 50 per cent, of North-East Derbyshire is still without electricity and many people will have had supplies cut off for a longer period.

The East Midlands Electricity Authority seems to have a longer backlog than Yorkshire Electricity which is probably because Derbyshire has been worst hit—but this is a good reason for a nationally co-ordinated scheme.

I have got the feeling that if this had been the south of England it would have been regarded as a national disaster, just as it was during the gales.

I appreciate that a lot of people have been working very hard over the weekend, but I find the lack of action by the Department of Energy quite worrying."

The Government's response to the gales in the south demonstrated that they were organised and concerned. Money was made available to local authorities under the Bellwin scheme. That decision was announced as soon as Parliament reassembled—the House will recall that the gales occurred during the recess—five days after the emergency. No such decision was made about the crisis that hit the water and electricity supplies of the east midlands. Many of my constituents were aghast at the Government's lack of action.

The House had an opportunity briefly to consider the problem on 10 December—the Monday after the blizzards —during Energy Question Time. Three of those questions related to electricity and that enabled hon. Members who represent the east midlands to refer to the crisis. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was lucky enough to ask a supplementary question and he pointed out to the Minister that

"60,000 people were cut off in the Chesterfield district over the weekend due to the storms, 1,000 faults occurred, and 20,000 emergency calls were made." [*Official Report*, 10 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 643.]

He also said that people would have been happy to have been able to plug in to what they were buying.

The peculiar thing was that the flotation of electricity shares was taking place that Monday. The flotation influenced the Government's failure to announce a crisis and the failure of East Midlands Electricity to ask the Government to do so. If national headlines had described the extent of the crisis in that company' area, shares in it would have fallen through the floor rather than gone through the roof. There was a conspiracy of silence about the problems faced by East Midlands Electricity.

Following Energy questions, a private notice question on the severe weather was put by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and was answered by the Home Secretary. It is an illustration of the lack of priority that the Government gave to the matter that they did not make a statement on it. A private notice question had to be tabled by the Opposition. Furthermore, the Home Secretary's answer to the PNQ concentrated on transport problems. Little mention was made of electricity supplies However, he said:

"At present some 380,000 customers are without an electricity supply. Most reconnections should be achieved today or tomorrow, but it will take longer in some isolated areas. Some 500,000 people are still without piped water."

The myth that the disaster occurred in isolated rural areas needs to be laid to rest. It did not. It occurred in conurbations and, if not in the centres of towns, in areas associated with them. Next to Chesterfield there is a fairly large town called Staveley, which was devastated in the severe weather. Residents of whole areas, not just small parts of the town, had to wait until the weekend for supplies to begin to be permanently re-established. At Woodthorpe the supply went off about seven times after it was reconnected. The Home Office seemed to have no understanding of the problems in the area.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook asked about the Bellwin scheme. The answer of the Home Secretary was:

"The right hon. Gentleman asked about what is known as the Bellwin scheme, under which the Government provide financial assistance towards emergency costs under arrangements that were agreed in 1982. The scheme is activated at Ministers' discretion when weather conditions are clearly exceptional and when, as a result, local authorities are likely to incure expenditure. When the scheme is activated, grant is paid to cover 85 per cent. of expenditure over a threshold that is currently £2 per charge payer."

Those are new arrangements with respect to the poll tax. The Bellwin scheme originally operated with respect to ratepayers. The scheme was fully brought into operation when the gales hit the south of England.

The Home Secretary continued:

"As the House knows, the scheme was activated in 1987 following the hurricane and again earlier this year following the severe winter storms. It is too early to know whether it will be activated this time."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 663.]

It was not too early to give an idea of whether the scheme would be activated. The Home Secretary said that activation was at Ministers' discretion when weather conditions are clearly exceptional. Any information collated by the Department of Energy would have shown that we faced severe weather conditions. Perhaps it takes a little time to sort out these things. But surely it should have taken no longer than it took to make a decision in the case of the gales in the south of England in 1987. That was within five days.

Several east midlands Members received a letter from the Secretary of State for Energy. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) has a copy with him. The letter says:

"Where local authorities are concerned, the Bellwin scheme could be invoked although there are at present no plans to do so as no claims from local authorities have been received."

What claims from local authorities were received in connection with the gales? The letter was written five days after the events—the time that it took Ministers, on earlier occasions, to rush to the House with a statement and say that the Bellwin provisions would be available. That letter was disgraceful.

By now, we should have had a statement to the effect that the Bellwin scheme will operate. A vast number of emergency services had to be provided. People whose electricity supply was cut off moved into community centres. All sorts of provision had to be made for the aged, young children and others at risk. District, parish and county council provision was needed, as well as a massive amount of voluntary provision. Councils such as Derbyshire, which is poll tax-capped, have limited

[Mr. Barnes]

resources on which to draw. The provision of extra services is likely to have an impact on their ability to provide services in future and may destroy their social services programme. It put a brake on the provision of other services that were needed at the time. A statement should have been made at the time—we should still have one—to the effect that the Bellwin scheme provisions will operate.

In my frustration at the fact that there was no statement about Bellwin or about the Government's intention to involve themselves in co-ordinating activity, I managed, at the last minute, to obtain a Standing Order No. 20 application on the Monday. I wanted to get the business of the House changed so that we could discuss the crisis. For example, it was being said that my constituents in Barrow Hill, who were trying to use the miners' welfare, would have to wait another four days before their electricity could be reconnected.

In some respects, what happened in the east midlands was worse than what happened in the gales in the south of England in 1987 because of the winter conditions. It is true that a thaw came later, but it is a difficult time of year and people can be at much greater risk, although I grant that there were massive difficulties in the south of England, which certainly deserved the assistance that it received. Things that happen in the south of England tend to elicit a rapid response and much media coverage, whereas areas such as the east midlands and Scotland—which also had problems and which had to wait a long time for Bellwin moneys—sometimes feel that they have almost been forgotten.

I tabled three early-day motions—208, 223 and 246—listing the problems and pointing out that, by 10 December, half a million people were without electricity. The figures given by East Midlands Electricity are customer figures. To establish the number of individuals concerned, we need to multiply those figures. I am talking not just about people's homes; shops were closed, nursing homes and homes for the mentally ill were affected, as were factories and pits such as Markham, Bolsover and Cresswell. High Moor pit in my constituency was able to operate only because it is linked to Kiveton park pit in Yorkshire. The electricity supply was driven in a cable from Kiveton park through to High Moor pit. Early-day motion 246 relates to the problems in retrospect because from last Monday only the rural districts remained cut off.

There has been an appeal to the Minister for a meeting to take place and I have already spoken of some of the problems about that. We have persistently been given underestimates about the size of the problem and there has been a lack of publicity. The Government have failed to make statements to the House to alert the media to the size of the problem that existed, which has been caught up with electricity privatisation.

We can draw lessons from the experience. One such lesson seems to be that when emergencies occur, people expect their Government to announce the problems and assure them that they are using what resources they can to attempt to handle them. There may be a case for setting up national emergency legislation in this country on the same basis as it exists in Canada, Australia and France.

Never again should such problems be faced by people in any region, certainly not in the east midlands, where people have already suffered. If there is the prospect of more bad weather this winter, with ice and snow such as we had recently and another collapse of electricity services, will people have to go through again what they have been through, unable to believe that everything possible is being done to assist them?

There are problems associated with East Midlands Electricity. I grant that after the first day it drafted in a host of people and much valuable work was done in an attempt to restore electricity supplies. But there were some problems related to the fabric of the services.

I received a letter from one of my constitutents in Woodthorpe in the Chesterfield district. Mr. Bennett wrote to the electricity board on 8 February 1990 about the problems of electricity supply in that district. He said:

"I know you are experiencing difficult times at the present but I would like you to investigate the reason why the Woodthorpe area of Staveley seems to be prone to regular power cuts or poor power. Since late last year to date we have had 5 power cuts and reduced power on other occasions. For the last 30 years we have always had problems and as we look out of our windows to Staveley town centre we see the lights burning whilst we are on candle power. This happened again last night—7 February 1990 between 7.20 and 10 pm. My sister-in-law lives in Stavely town centre and never seems to experience any of our misfortunes. A year or so ago you re-routed the overhead power cables and we were assured that our troubles were over. NOT SO. I write as a committee member of the Woodthorpe Residents Association and the local neighbourhood watch scheme."

The reply was interesting. It came from Mr. Hitchcock, operations engineer at the Chatsworth district of East Midlands Electricity. He outlines the work being done and the difficulties of the past. He admits the problem and states:

"next year I intend to monitor the situation to determine whether any further work is required on the electricity network."

He certainly learnt something about that after the recent bad weather.

The main lesson to be learnt is that the privatisation of electricity has not helped with handling such crises. The *Daily Express* headline from that Monday was "Killer Craze Chaos"; by the Tuesday, the headline had become "Share Power for Millions", the article giving details of the sale of electricity shares. The following day the headline ran:

"Electricity surges to £76 profit"—that is, for each 100 shares sold. Huge sums of money were being made.

The only person to get it right and detect humour in all this was Jak, in the *Evening Standard*. His cartoon showed two old people going up to the attendant outside Nottinghamshire power station—part of East Midlands Electricity—and saying:

"As soon as we bought shares in it we were cut off."

Due to the massive problems caused by the privatisation of electricity, the Government have ducked some of their responsibilities. This was a most unfortunate conjunction of events. We must see to it that these problems never occur again.

5.36 pm

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I am here to support my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) because Ashfield, like the whole of north Nottinghamshire and north-east Derbyshire, suffered greatly. The electricity companies and the Government

were caught with their trousers down by the appalling weather. There was no excuse, as they were tipped off five days before.

We should have made progress since 1947; we are in the 1990s. Yet despite all the technology that we have, the Energy Department could not overcome the severe weather in parts of the country, especially in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and the whole of Derbyshire. The Government must pull their socks up. If this happens again, God help us. When they feel that they are losing the argument, the Government and the electricity authorities say that the weather was an act of God. That is the defence that they put up. But it will not wash.

The people in my constituency are not pleased with the Department of Energy. I do not blame the Under-Secretary of State, who has only just moved into the Department, but the Secretary of State has been there for quite some time——

Mr. Harry Barnes: It is on his head.

Mr. Haynes: He should have anticipated the problems, given that he was warned.

Perhaps I could relate to the Minister some of the happenings in north Nottinghamshire and in my constituency. I echo the praise of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East and the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for the local radio stations for their marvellous work. Obviously, the television people could not send messages because there was no power, but people with battery radios were able to receive messages from Radio Nottingham and Radio Trent.

In our county there are elderly people's homes that are all electric, no gas. The local radio stations appealed to people to provide Calor gas equipment to keep elderly people warm, never mind the provision of hot meals. My constituency, like that of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East, is semi-rural. In the rural part of the constituency, it was really rough. On Sunday morning my hon. Friend was interviewed for television in a field in Derbyshire. The programme was relayed to Birmingham and there was snow all around as deep as hell. That clearly showed the serious problems in that area.

The Department must pull up its socks and do something in case this happens again. In my constituency people appealed to the local authority for water. The pumping stations could not operate because there was no electricity, and the local authority did its best with water tankers and sent them to as many of its properties as possible to flush toilets with buckets of water. How can such things happen in 1990 when we can send rockets to the moon? It takes some understanding. I am sure that my hon. Friend is right when he says that the Government were more concerned about flogging the electricity industry than about the poor beggars in the rural areas who were really suffering.

Radio Nottingham told people about a shop that was loaded with all kinds of batteries and said that if people could get to it they would be provided. What effort did the Department of Energy make? It was no flipping help at all. Many of my constituents said that all that the Government were worried about was flogging off the electricity industry. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East, I could not get out on the Saturday morning to go to my surgery. If I remember rightly what the hon. Member of Gedling whispered in my ear a short time ago, he could not get to his surgery either.

The situation was serious, but fortunately my telephone was still operational. At least people with problems were able to ring and ask for help, but it is difficult to help when a Member of Parliament is not responsible for the distribution of this, that and the other. He is responsible for distribution of information if it is available to him, to help people in such need.

Kids could not go to school, but even if they could everything was electric, so schools were closed. I have heard Ministers in the Department of Energy—not this Minister because he has not been there very long—bragging about the electricity industry and how marvellous nuclear power is. Yet we have one drop of snow, and they are beaten. Many parts of Europe have every year worse winters then we have, but they still get the power through. I do not understand why we have such problems. There must have been a slip-up. The Government have had getting on for 12 years to overcome problems like a lot of snow on the ground, leading to everything damn well stopping. I remember hon. Members talking about being stuck on motorways because the snow could not be moved, about lorries jack-knifing and all the rest. There was a problem, and it took a long while for power to come back to these areas.

Like my hon. Friend and other hon. Members, I congratulate the work force on the way in which it set about its job. Some of them worked right through the night, day after day, to make sure that power got through to those who most needed it. Those turning up to work on public transport found that the towel had been thrown in, and the vehicles had had to go back in the garages because they could not get around. There was no transport system. It was appalling.

I hope that the Department will pull out all the stops if anything similar happens again. Let this be a lesson. It is not 1947 now; it is 1990, and I hope that we shall not have the same problems in 1991. The hon. Member for Gedling seems to have moved on to the Back Benches so that he can make a contribution. If that is the case, I shall sit down and give him the opportunity to do so, as there is not all that much time left.

5.47 am

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a short contribution to the debate. It is always a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes). I always want to call him my hon. Friend. He has expressed well the frustrations and difficulties that were felt, particularly in Nottinghamshire, which was so adversely affected by the severe weather conditions that he described.

I shall not touch on the role of the Department of Energy, which had only a peripheral role in what happened in the period that we are discussing. The severe weather conditions did not affect my constituency so badly as they affected that of the hon. Gentleman. Practically all my constituents had power restored relatively quickly. On the Saturday, I managed to get across my constituency, to fulfil an engagement that I had agreed to do some time before. It was at Ernhale court in Arnold, an old people's complex, which the hon. Gentleman may know quite well, where I had the pleasure of joining the residents for sherry

[Mr. Andrew Mitchell]

and mince pies to toast the Christmas season. During that visit, having made my way with great difficulty across Carlton and over into Arnold, I was able to see at first hand the grave difficulties from which my constituents were suffering.

The concern that I felt most strongly was for the difficulties and anxieties caused to elderly people, who were dependent on electricity to provide them with the basic services in life, such as heating. In view of the fact that they might be cut off for a long time, a danger which in too many cases became a reality, that point must be taken on board by the House. Whatever we think about the way in which the electricity boards responded to the severe weather, it is important that there should be perhaps mature reflection on what happened. We should await the reports of the utilities to see what they have to say about their plans for the future and the way in which the difficulties that they faced were handled.

Thousands of men and women employed or brought in by the East Midlands electricity board, which is based in my constituency and is now East Midlands Electricity, worked round the clock to restore power supplies in my constituency and elsewhere in the east midlands. Some came from as far away as southern Ireland, and they worked extremely hard in conditions that I am reliably informed had not been seen in the east midlands for 20 years. They experienced weather damage which many of them had not encountered before. It was the first occasion I can recall when I found English weather threatening and frightening.

As I have said, it is important to wait until we are able to give these matters wider and more mature consideration. We need to reflect on the events that took place and the lessons that need to be learnt. With the privilege of having East Midlands Electricity based in my constituency, I have every confidence that the management there will examine any lessons that are to be learnt, learn them and implement the results in the future in the style and with the vigour that is required and that we have come to expect of them.

5.51 am

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) for securing and initiating the debate. Back-Bench Members and Front-Bench spokesmen have had the opportunity to place on record their reflections on the events that took place a comparatively short time ago in the east midlands.

It is not exactly with unalloyed pleasure that we are in the Chamber at this unearthly hour, but it was at about the same unearthly hour that electricity linesmen were being dragged out of bed on 8 December, eventually in their thousands when East Midlands Electricity realised the magnitude of the disaster. It is not a region that I know especially well. I understand, however, that snow had been falling pretty well throughout Saturday, and that in the early hours of Sunday the temperature had dropped sufficiently for ice accretion to occur. That accretion occurs only when the temperature is within 1 deg. C, plus or minus, of 0 deg. C. Large lumps of ice become attached to wires and cables, which weigh 10 times more and five times more than the weight at which they can remain attached to their poles.

This was an uncanny reminder of that ghastly period in the history of the North sea trawler industry about 15 years ago when trawlers were affected in the same way. They became top heavy as ice attached to their superstructure, the centre of gravity would suddenly become affected and they would turn turtle without warning, with substantial loss of life. Ice accretion is rare but not unknown. We in Britain perhaps experience it more than elsewhere because our country is windier and wetter than others where much lower temperatures are recorded. It is something for which we should be prepared, but because it does not happen more than once every 20 years we attempt to muddle through. We then have to face conditions that amounted, recently, to a major catastrophe for the east midlands, and one that perhaps did not receive the attention that it properly deserved for the reasons that my hon. Friends the Members for Derbyshire, North-East and for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and the hon. Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) have set out. East Midlands Electricity said:

"The extent of the damage, with poles and miles of wire on the ground, is similar to that experienced during the 1987 hurricane in the South of England."

I think that we would all agree that it did not get the same attention as the 1987 hurricane in the national press. That hurricane was thought to be a national problem, whereas the damage in the east midlands was viewed as a regional problem affecting those unfortunates living north of Watford gap. It was not the subject of dinner table conversation in Hampstead; it was not the subject of leaders in *The Times*; it was not thought to be on a par with the hurricane which happened shortly after the general election that brought me and other hon. Members to the House. The Secretary of State for the Environment made a statement about the hurricane on the Monday that the House reassembled after the summer recess. The hurricane remained a major talking point for months because we could all see evidence of it in the trees that had fallen down in Hyde park and elsewhere.

Those of us who are not from the east midlands have not seen the devastation there. However, to get some idea of the measure of it, I can tell the House that 800,000 customers were without power on 8 December. The figure gradually reduced—500,000 by midnight that day; 300,000 by midnight on Sunday; 190,000 by midnight on Monday; 90,000 by midnight on Tuesday; 55,000 by midnight on Wednesday; 30,000 by midnight on Thursday; and 14,500 by midnight on Friday. The figures came down, but six days after the event there were still 14,500 customers without power.

My latest information from East Midlands Electricity is that there are still hundreds of consumers without power in the more remote parts of the east midlands, yet it is now 12 days and a couple hours since the event. It is a major dislocation of electricity supplies. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield said, many people now depend on electricity in all-electric homes and institutions. They no longer have coal fires and supplies of candles and other alternatives. The more dependent we are on electricty, the more essential it is that we are better prepared for the occasional weather disaster.

I am told by East Midlands Electricity that the damage in the telecommunications service is even greater than that

in the electricity service. The number of telecommunications cables that have come down, and are still down, is greater than the number of electricity cables. They are the non-weatherproof part of our public utilities. Water and gas pipes run underground, but electricity—other than in large cities—and telecommunications cables are above ground. They are prone to exposure to high winds, especially when they combine with snow, sleet and ice, as happened on 8 December in the east midlands.

We are trying to measure how good performance was and what needs to be done to improve it. Reference has rightly been made to the need for mature reflection. East Midlands Electricity will be producing a report, and I hope that we will have access to it in the Library or in another forum here where we can debate it. Hon. Members who represent other parts of the country will want to determine what lessons can be learnt from a weather disaster that resulted in 800,000 customers being left without electricity for some time, and 500,000 customers being left without electricity for 24 hours or more.

Britain is proud of its electricity industry. It is far from being a lame duck. It has an exceptionally good record, comparable with Germany and among the best in the world, on security of supply. It has a record superior to that of the United States, Japan and France on the avoidance of blackouts and brownouts. Therefore, when the supply to a large part of the country is knocked out, it merits close examination to discover what went wrong, whether it could have been avoided and whether it can be avoided in future.

We are also proud of the efforts of the company's management and work force and of the staff who were borrowed from other companies and shipped in from other countries as well. That was done fairly rapidly, but not instantaneously. That would have meant travelling along the M6, M69, M42 and M1, which was not possible on the first day.

When the matter was discussed in the House on a private notice question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), hon. Members tended to recount their experiences in the snow rather than what happened to the east midlands region. They regaled us with stories about how long they had had to spend in their cars on the M6, almost boasting about their experiences. There was only a limited discussion of the regional electricity and other infrastructure problems. They dealt largely with how inconvenient it was for Members of Parliament, attempting to fulfil engagements, not to be able to travel up the M6 without let or hindrance. That is an important point, but it is not the most important point.

This is the first opportunity that we have had, admittedly before a limited audience, to discuss the regional problems in north Derbyshire and the surrounding areas; looking at the matter not just as the blocking of four motorways by snow, but to see what lessons can be learnt for the electricty supply system and whether we could or should have done better in getting supplies reconnected.

It is true that the blocking of the motorway vitiated early attempts to ship in large numbers of linesmen to reconnect supplies. The company could not even use its helicopter in the early stages. It could not get it airborne. But gradually, by the middle of the week, it was able to assemble something like General Schwarzkopf's task force in Saudi Arabia. The men, materials and supplies had to be put together in the right place—it is no good having men without materials, or vice versa—and that took three or four days.

For large numbers of people to be without electricity for three or four days creates a colossal problem. Our ability to make do and mend is not as great as it was. To that extent, society is much less flexible and resourceful than it was. One cannot avoid mentioning the fact that some local market traders and shopkeepers exploited the situation. We are told that on Monday, when people in Mansfield were desperately looking for candles, they were on sale at £2·50 each. I am glad to say that, to counter that boil on the surface of the enterprise culture, the company managed to acquire 50,000 candles which were then distributed free by Age Concern by Wednesday evening.

That was a useful countervailing force. It may have been done four or five days after the start of the disaster, but it prevented gross exploitation of the situation with people trying to make a bomb out of the fact that candle supplies were limited just when people were desperate for any means of lighting their way to bed or finding the toilet in the middle of the night, or for whatever other reason they might have needed candles.

All that illustrates the extent of the crisis, and just how dislocated a society such as ours, which is so dependent on modern conveniences, becomes when the source of power for those modern conveniences is suddenly unavailable.

By an extraordinary coincidence, those events occurred just at the moment when the button was about to be pushed, and the champagne about to be poured, at the celebrations to mark the flotation of the 12 electricity companies. They all arranged champagne parties for 11 December, with the exception of East Midlands Electricity —which was sensible enough to cancel its celebrations. It was successfully floated on the stock exchange, but its management realised that it would have been most inappropriate to hold a champagne party on a day when 100,000 of that company's customers were without electricity.

Incidentally, that coincidence might be viewed by some of a more religious bent as the wrath of God being visited on the Secretary of State for Energy for daring to privatise the industry, but I do not go in for such extremist theories. So I shall not invoke the image of the four horsemen of the apocalypse being glimpsed in the darkness, riding through north Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

What is the most important aspect of the electricity industry? Is it the same as that of the water companies, a year after their flotation, which is to increase their dividend by the greatest percentage? I am told by people in the financial world that that is the current priority of the 10 water and sewage companies. If the same thing happens over the next year in respect of the 12 electricity companies, they will have thrown away the industry's crown jewels. Its crown jewels were displayed last week when, as part of the public service ethic, people were willing to work through the night in the frozen wastes of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire to restore services and meet the needs of customers for a continuous supply. Will there be a clash in future between the companies' clear fiduciary duty to their shareholders to maximise profits and the need that everyone in Britain has—except those of a hermit-like persuasion—for electricity to flow whenever we throw the switch?

That public utility mentality must be retained even by the privatised companies, or they will be unable to

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

persuade staff to turn out at the dead of night, ship in help from other regions, or secure a commitment from another company even if it does not know where the money is to come from. In the past, one board could ring another and ask to borrow 100 of its linesmen, and leave the financial arrangements to be sorted out later. That staff had to be paid for, but there was no haggling over price when they were needed most—in the same way as the benefiting company would not haggle five years later, when Yorkshire or south-west England were affected.

That tradition has been built up during the period that the industry has been in public ownership. It is essential that that remains the overriding ethic of the industry, even if it has been floated in the private sector.

If the linesmen are infected by the gold digger psychology—like the people who were selling candles for £2.50 each in Mansfield that Monday night—they will start to think, "They need us. It is supply and demand. We want treble time and a full lodging allowance, as if we were staying in a five-star hotel." They will say that if Kleinwort Benson has made a fortune out of the privatisation of the industry, they will make a fortune out of it, too.

If we lose the willingness to turn out at dead of night because it is a tradition in the industry, and that is what one is supposed to do because society has become so dependent on continuity of electricity supply, the industry will be on the slippery slope.

When we finally receive a proper report, after mature reflection, when all the facts are known and consumers are finally reconnected, Opposition Ministers will want to know about the degree to which the public service ethic remains fully effective, despite the financial euphoria that was beginning to overcome parts of the industry as the magic day of 11 December approached. We shall want to know what guarantees the Government will be able to offer us that—privatisation, or no privatisation—the public service ethic, the willingness to turn out and to work double shifts until every consumer who has lost supply is reconnected, will remain, regardless of who owns the industry, whether it is private shareholders or the state, through the Secretary of State for Energy.

6.13 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): We have heard graphic descriptions of the inconvenience and hardship suffered by people in the east midlands due to the severe weather over the weekend of 8 and 9 December. Despite the hour, this morning's debate has seen contributions not only from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who instigated the debate, but from the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), whose constituency was also affected. On the Conservative Benches, we have had a contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) and I also know that my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) was affected personally, as were his constituents, and that my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), on the Treasury Bench, also represents a midlands seat and therefore has an interest in the debate.

I should like to join my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling and other hon. Members in extending sympathy to those who were without electricity supplies for many days—in some cases for well over a week. People were affected not only in their homes, but also at work. Water supplies were also affected and there were interruptions in the electricity supply to a number of important businesses and industries in the area. I know that a number of British Coal collieries were affected, as were Rolls-Royce at Derby, Courtaulds Acetate, and a number of British Gypsum's mines, and that Severn Trent Water lost supply to 13 of its 15 water treatment plants. So a very wide area was affected. At times, the supply to more than half a million electricity customers was interrupted. The storm was forecast and East Midlands Electricity began to put staff and materials in position at an early stage, before the storm hit. Its 13 emergency centres were manned and engineers and line gangs were on standby. When the storm hit the area, however, they found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get the men and materials to the stricken areas. Snow cover affected movement, and blizzard conditions made it impossible to repair damage immediately.

The phenomenon known as ice accretion arises from wet snow falling on the line at around freezing point, and then refreezing owing to the cooling effect of the wind. The build-up of ice on one side of the line causes the wire to rotate, opening another area to the wind. Ice up to 12 ins thick was deposited on some of the line connectors, which adds approximately 15 lb a yard to the weight of the line. It is not surprising that, in such conditions, lines fell down or broke and wooden poles collapsed; indeed, even some of the large 132kv steel pylons were damaged. As a result, by the evening of Saturday 8 December about half a million customers were without supplies.

The normal standard of design allows a 132kv system to withstand half an inch of ice in a 50 mph wind, with a safety factor of two. A build-up of ice of up to 12 ins on some of the lines was clearly well beyond the design capability of even the best systems. All the voltage lines were affected in one way or another. Obviously repairs had to start on the high-voltage lines, because only when they were repaired was it possible to identify problems in the lower-voltage systems. Some customers may not have understood that that sequence of events was necessary, and understandably felt frustrated because their local, lower-voltage line was not tackled first.

East Midlands Electricity made every effort to keep customers informed. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East paid tribute to that effort, and to the local radio stations which played such an important part in keeping customers and local people informed. In addition, the company worked with local authorities and with voluntary agencies—as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

I stress that no system in the world could have been built to withstand such an onslaught. Weather conditions in the area were the worst for 20 years. The alternative —placing all lines underground—is attractive but expensive; it costs up to 10 times as much to put a line underground as it does to send it overground. A massive capital investment of around £4 billion would be required over about 30 years to complete the "undergrounding" of all lines in the areas, and in view of the infrequency of such severe weather we do not consider that that level of investment could be justified.

Mr. Harry Barnes: If such an incident were to be repeated, the costs would be excessive. Comparisons have

been made with the original cost of providing cables, either overground or underground. When a system breaks down, emergency expenditure at great cost is involved. People have to be drafted in from Scotland, Northern Ireland and other regions. I hope that the report to be produced by East Midlands Electricity will be debated so that we can investigate the matter fully and decide what the most cost-effective arrangement would be.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The assessment that I have given will be reconsidered in the light of experience. The east midlands area alone has about 63,000 km of line, about 60 per cent. of which—mostly low-voltage line—is underground. If it were thought appropriate to put underground an even higher percentage of the low-voltage lines and further sections of the high-voltage lines, that would be considered.

I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to the tremendous efforts mounted by the staff and management of East Midlands Electricity and to all who gave assistance in extremely difficult and uncomfortable conditions. In all, help was received from some 1,200 staff from outside the area, in addition to the management, staff, engineers and linesmen in the east midlands area. Help was also received from Northern Ireland and from the Irish Republic, as well as from the Army and specialist contractors. The co-operation between the regional electricity companies was particularly impressive and continued the tradition of mutual assistance within the industry.

There is no evidence of any lack of co-ordination among those concerned. It is certainly completely untrue to suggest that the successful flotation of the regional electricity companies was connected in any way with the response from my Department. The situation was monitored throughout by the Department of Energy and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was kept informed. What was required was not words or declarations of emergency by the Government, but the early restoration of supplies to those affected. That is why the primary responsibility and work fell upon the regional electricity companies and the grid companies, and I am very pleased at the way in which they responded.

Mr. Harry Barnes: Why was no statment made in the House? Did not the seriousness of the disruption to supplies call for a statement from the Department of Energy or the Home Office? Ought not something to have been said about the Bellwin scheme, so that people could know where they stood and could take effective action without having to worry about money?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Hon. Members were kept informed. As for the Bellwin scheme, Ministers said that in principle the scheme could operate if the criteria were met. So far as I know, no requests for assistance under the Bellwin scheme have been received from the authorities concerned.

Mr. Harry Barnes: We know that appeals for assistance were made after the gales in the south of England. The Minister's letter, from which I quoted, was written five days after the disaster. It made the point that has been made today—that no applications had been received. Yet a statement was made in the House five days after the gales in the south of England, saying that money would be made available. The authorities were asked on that occasion to send in the details. Why was that problem dealt with in one way and this one in another?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In the gales, several primary duties fell to local authorities, but it was made known that the Bellwin scheme could operate and applications were made and processed in the normal way. The Government stand ready to consider any requests from local authorities in the areas concerned, but to my knowledge none has been received so far.

The flotation of the regional electricity companies, which proceeded at about the same time as the storm, did not affect the response of the electricity companies or of the Department. I stress that the electricity supply regulations apply equally whether companies are in the private or the public sector. They regulate public safety and the quality of electric supply, and they are blind to whether the operating company is in the public or the private sector. The regulations are enforced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The Director General of Electricity Supply has written to all the regional electricity companies suggesting a review of the lessons to be learnt. The company most directly affected—East Midlands Electricity—is carrying out a review of events, and the Department's engineering inspectors will be keeping closely in touch with it.

It is clear that a storm of almost unprecedented ferocity hit the area on 8 and 9 December. Great damage and disruption was caused, but I was impressed and pleased at the way in which the electricity companies reacted. Of course there may be lessons to be learnt. If it is clear that additional precautionary measures should be put in place, we shall consider them when the information has been received, and we shall take into account the constructive suggestions of hon. Members.

I am pleased that the electricity supply of most customers has been reconnected, but I do not underestimate the hardship suffered by some members of the public. In general, they worked impressively to restore supplies or were patient and understanding in the light of this natural disaster. I do not feel that the Department has been negligent in keeping hon. Members informed or in ensuring that the electricity industry reacts in its traditional way of offering a service to the public of which we can all be proud.

Casualty Facilities (Stockport)

6.28 am

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): This morning, I have the opportunity of drawing the House's attention to an issue which has concerned me since I was elected to represent Stockport in 1983, and on which I have compaigned ever since. I regard it as the single most pressing problem for my constituents. I refer to the split-site nature of acute hospital services.

There are approximately 30,000 in-patient admissions a year in Stockport. That is considerably more than for well-known teaching hospitals nearby such as Withington and Manchester royal infirmary. Yet the medical staff at Stockport face an enormous problem in trying to provide a modern and efficient acute service on sites that are three miles apart.

Three departments are located at Stockport infirmary: the orthopaedic department, the ear, nose and throat department, and the accident and emergency department. All other acute services are dealt with three miles away at Stepping Hill. That situation is intolerable and the patience of the staff is now exhausted. Despite that, excellent service is given at Stockport, and in league tables drawn up by the regional health authority the Stockport infirmary and Stepping Hill often come top. The staff would have caused the Government serious embarrassment long ago but for their dedicated, hard-working nature.

Stockport infirmary is a fine building that has just celebrated its centenary, but it is totally unsuited to be a modern hospital. It is situated in the middle of town opposite the town hall and the parking facilities are suited to the mid-19th century. Ambulances have enormous difficulties even getting to the hospital and an emergency case arriving by car cannot get anywhere near the entrance. Yet the infirmary houses one of the busiest casualty departments in the north-west. Last year almost 60,000 new patients were treated in that department.

I visit the infirmary regularly and I regret to report that, on many occasions, the atmosphere has been little short of pandemonium inside and outside the hospital simply because of the physical nature of the building. The staff are extraordinarily hard working, but they work under Victorian conditions that would have upset Florence Nightingale.

On my first visit to the accident and emergency department, soon after my election in 1983, Mr. Tony Redmond, then the consultant in charge of the department, showed me the conditions in which he and other staff worked. He pointed out to me the dangers created by the acute services being on a split site. I do not exaggerate when I describe the situation as dangerous. It is an extraordinarily busy casualty department and the major accident-receiving centre serving a population of 300,000, but there are no intensive facilities on site—they are three miles down the road at Stepping Hill. The blood bank is also situated there. Unless a seriously ill patient is fortunate enough to have problems requiring an orthopaedic surgeon or a complaint affecting his ear, nose or throat, he must be put back in the ambulance and taken down the A6, the busiest non-dual carriageway in the north, to Stepping Hill. Alternatively, he must wait for a taxi to bring a consultant from Stepping Hill to the infirmary.

Mr. Alistair Gray, the consultant now in charge of the accident and emergency department, wrote to me last year saying that there was no doubt that patient lives were put at risk each time there was a transfer to Stepping Hill. Lives have been lost, and will continue to be lost until something is done about the situation, which I deplore. It is a disgrace that a patient, having reached the apparently safe haven of the casualty department, should find limited facilities awaiting him.

Since Mr. Redmond first brought the matter to my attention seven years ago, I have bombarded the district and regional health authorities, the then Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Health with demands that something should be done.

Not many Members of Parliament are happy to campaign for a hospital to be closed, but that is what must be done to give a decent service to the people of Stockport. I have brought—probably dragged—two Ministers to the House on the matter: first, my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) when he was Minister for Health and recently my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) when he was a Minister at the Department. I asked them to consider the position in Stockport.

There have been delegations to Ministers here in London, including one to the present Chief Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), when he was at the Department. The proposal to close the infirmary has the support of all the staff and the unions and, indeed, the whole of Stockport, apart from some members of the Labour party who seek some short-term advantage out of campaigning for it to remain open. All the staff support the hospital's closure because those dedicated health workers are determined to provide the best for Stockport and so am I. But we have been thwarted at every turn.

The proposal to move the accident and emergency department to Stepping Hill has been on the books for almost 10 years. During that time there has not been a single major capital project in Stockport. Yet last year Stockport was not included in the region's health capital programme up to 1992-93. I and the district health authority had been led to believe that Stockport had an overwhelming case for inclusion in the region's three-year £166 million capital programme. Its failure to be included in that programme was a devastating blow to the morale of the medical profession in Stockport.

It is clear that with the reform of the health service there is to be greater competition between NHS hospitals. The medical profession in Stockport is ready to accept that. But how can it compete with the nearby Manchester royal infirmary, Wythenshawe hospital and Withington hospital if it has the appalling split-site problem?

Next month Stockport has a further chance to be included in the capital programme. I cannot emphasise how important it is that the bid should be successful. In March this year the north-west regional medical committee pointed out that the Department of Health had accepted the recommendation of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Casualty Surgeons Association that it is unacceptable for major accident and emergency departments to be located away from the full back-up facilities of a main district general hospital. That point was taken by the regional medical officer, who stated that it was a fundamental principle of the region's service and capital planning developments.

I have been led to believe that some mix-up resulted in Stockport not being included in the capital programme last year. It would be a shattering blow if next month it were not included. I beg my hon. Friend the Minister to do all in his power to ensure that it is included. If he gives me that assurance, I and all of Stockport will wish him a very happy Christmas.

6.38 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): As my hon. Friend said, he has been a consistent supporter of this project ever since the day he was elected to the House in 1983. He made it clear that he was an early convert to the unacceptability of the present arrangements for the treatment of accident and emergency and other patients on the split-site basis of the Stockport hospital. He has been an effective—I might even say relentless—campaigner for action to resolve the problem since he first arrived in the House. I am conscious that I am the latest of a long line of Ministers, most of whom are now much more distinguished and eminent than I, who have been the recipients of my hon. Friend's representations on behalf of his constituents.

I am sure that they will agree with me that the argument that my hon. Friend has presented to us and to the House is a powerful one and I am confident that it will ultimately succeed, not least because of the power of my hon. Friend's advocacy. The House has witnessed his advocacy on behalf of his constituents twice this week. Today, he has had the opportunity to present the argument at some length. Yesterday, he presented it at Question Time—not at such great length, but perhaps at more length than is usual on such occasions.

It is extraordinary that an argument which is so widely supported in the Stockport area and which has been recognised to be powerful by many in the health service, including Health Ministers, should have elicited such a hostile reception yesterday from the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). It is odd that an argument based clearly on the principle that the proposals that my hon. Friend supports would produce a major advance in the quality of care provided to patients in that area should be the subject of opposition from a member of a party which prides itself on its espousal of the cause of the national health service. I am sure that my hon. Friend will lose no opportunity to give the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish a chance to explain his point of view more widely in the Stockport area.

My hon. Friend has made it clear to the House that Stockport infirmary is an aging hospital. Although it is distinguished, the building is perhaps better equipped to stand opposite the town hall and perform some distinguished function in the centre of Stockport than to house a hospital. Certainly, the building is widely recognised not to be adequate for the use to which it is currently put.

As my hon. Friend explained, the infirmary has one of the busiest accident and emergency departments in the north-west, treating almost 60,000 new patients each year. It is not the 60,000 new patients, however, who pose a problem in the provision of accident and emergency facilities in Stockport—it is the fact that 2,500 of those patients have to be transferred during their treatment from Stockport infirmary to Stepping Hill hospital, three miles down the A6, which is one of the busiest roads in the north-west. I have good reason to know that, because at a point further south in its course it passes through my constituency. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that in Leicestershire we have been able to obtain finance for dualling the A6 and taking it round some villages, precisely because the road is so heavily used.

Mr. Flavell: That is my second most important campaign.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend will know that, although, for constituency reasons, I may wish to join him in that campaign, I cannot deal with it in detail now.

The transfer of patients during their treatment between two acute hospitals carries with it significant risks, especially as the journey can take 30 minutes or more at times of peak traffic. It is a matter not of speculation but of fact that cardiac arrests have taken place in ambulances between those two hospitals. Not only does the transfer present avoidable and unnecessary risks for patients; it is a waste of resources because every patient transferred between the two hospital sites has to be accompanied by medical and nursing staff. It is an absurd waste of the time of front-line, highly trained, expensive, dedicated staff to have them stewarding patients between two hospital sites, especially when it is in the patients' interests that that transfer should not take place.

It is a powerful case. One does not have to be an expert in every detail of the circumstances of the Stockport area to understand the inadequacies of the present level of provision. As my hon. Friend has said, this is not merely a lay assessment of the position on the two sites. The case that he has espoused has been argued strongly by, among others, Mr. Redmond, and by all the consultants involved in acute medicine in Stockport, by the North Western regional medical committee, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Casualty Surgeons Association, which have all said that it is unacceptable to have accident and emergency provision divorced from general acute provision within a district general hospital. The expert opinion merely reinforces what most of us would regard as common sense. If we are admitted to hospital through an accident and emergency department, our hope would be that our acute condition could be treated by whatever specialist treatment and back-up was necessary within the hospital to which we were admitted.

In Stockport at present there is clearly a wasteful duplication of resources. The infirmary offers less effective medical care to the patient and has been described as unacceptable by those with a lay interest, and general management and professional opinion in the health service. Furthermore, precisely because it is recognised to be unacceptable, no one is surprised that the College of Anaesthetists has temporarily refused to recognise Stockport infirmary as a training centre for junior anaesthetist posts, and the ear, nose and throat hospital recognition committee has demonstrated its concern about the level of provision in the district by granting only temporary recognition for junior ENT posts in the hospital.

All this is profoundly unsatisfactory. However, the situation is a tribute to the dedicated staff of the two hospitals, in this context particularly those at Stockport hospital, who have put so much effort into making an avowedly unsatisfactory state of affairs work in the best

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way possible in the circumstances. The health service relies on a dedicated caring staff, and nowhere more so than in my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Favell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, as he is talking about the dedicated way in which staff at Stockport infirmary behave. In many parts of the country, there would have been shroud waving by now. It is only because the Stockport staff are decent, hard-working, capable people who have gone on in their quiet way that the situation has been allowed to continue. If the same circumstances had applied in central Birmingham, all hell would have been let loose. The decency, hard work and dedication of the Stockport staff should be recognised.

Mr. Dorrell: I recognise the decency and hard work of the staff in the district. Without that, the system could not have been made to work. It is up to us not to take advantage of that, and my hon. Friend is anxious that we should not do so. The dedication, hard work and quiet getting on with the job by his constituents is matched only by the noise that he generates in trying to change the situation.

One of the arguments against my hon. Friend's proposals—the concentration of accident and emergency care on one site at Stepping Hill—is the implications of that for patients coming from the northern part of the Stockport health district. That concern is entirely misplaced and that argument does not tell, as it is alleged to do, against my hon. Friend's conclusions. The argument is wrong because it devalues and fails to take into account the service offered by the Stockport ambulance service and its ability to take patients in need of acute hospital care quickly and effectively from the northern part of the health district to Stepping Hill hospital.

All the ambulance staff in the Stockport service have either completed modular training courses in paramedic skills in some specialties or have qualified on the full NHS training authority paramedic course and are therefore fully equipped to ensure that patients are taken safely to Stepping Hill hospital if they need emergency care.

Furthermore, every emergency vehicle in the service is already equipped with defibrillators, which should be of some comfort to people in the northern part of the area who may be concerned at the entirely wrong idea that their interests are not served by concentrating accident and emergency services at Stepping Hill. Residents in the northern part of the area need to remember that the Greater Manchester ambulance service has standing instructions to take every accident and emergency case to the nearest accident and emergency department. If provision in Stockport moves to Stepping Hill, more patients will be taken from accident and emergency services in the northern part of the district to hospitals in south and north Manchester. There is nothing new in that; the decisions will just be taken across slightly new boundaries.

It would be absurd to take too seriously the arbitrary boundaries between health districts and not to take account of the fact that what is important is that patients in need of emergency care should be put in well-equipped ambulances with well-qualified staff and taken to the nearest emergency department, which may not be within the arbitrary administrative boundaries of the health district.

I wish to draw attention to some of the benefits that would flow from the unified service for which my hon. Friend has argued. It would not only provide better quality accident and emergency care; it would enable the district to achieve an integrated paediatric unit on one site. That would provide a single environment geared for children's needs, including a mother and baby unit, a child isolation unit, an ear, nose and throat department, and ophthalmology—all paediatric care in one unit. That would be a major benefit of the scheme that my hon. Friend supports.

Secondly, the orthopaedic services would be concentrated on two sites instead of three and there would be separate provision for traumatic and elective work, so that the one was less prone to interfere with the other.

Thirdly, this would allow more effective use of operating theatres. The health service attaches greater importance to that than it once did, and rightly so, because fully staffed operating theatres not operating on patients are a crass waste of resources, and the chance to plan their effective use would be a major benefit of a unified system.

The money saved through the greater productivity which would result from implementation of the scheme would amount to £860,000 a year in the single district in my hon. Friend's constituency. Of that, £152,000 would come not from more efficient use of medical manpower but from savings on energy and maintenance. The present set-up cannot be allowed to endure too long, given that so much money is being wasted in that way.

I hope that I have made it clear that the argument espoused by my hon. Friend finds a ready ear in the Department of Health and in the administration of the health service generally.

Mr. Favell: I thank my hon. Friend for the careful and receptive way in which he has heard my argument. On behalf of the people of Stockport, I wish him a happy Christmas.

Mr Dorrell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I hope that what I am about to say will not lead him to withdraw his good wishes. The proposal that my hon. Friend espouses has a ready audience in the Department and, in one form or another, it will be implemented by the NHS in his area in the not too distant future. He will understand, however, that the administration of the health service and decisions on investment proposals are quite properly matters for the management of the NHS. It is not for me but for regions and districts to decide.

As my hon. Friend has said, in the next month or six weeks the North Western regional health authority will decide its three-year capital programme to 1993-94 and no doubt Stockport health authority will argue strongly for the proposal in the context of the capital programme. The decision whether to go ahead with the proposal in that capital programme properly belongs to the regional health authority, which will have to decide in the context of its capital budget-setting process. It would be wrong for me to pre-empt that decision, and I shall not do so.

The clear argument that my hon. Friend has advanced is widely accepted not only by the Department but by the NHS in the north-west. I am confident that my hon.

Friend's powers of advocacy will ensure that the unacceptable standard of provision for accidents and emergencies in his constituency will soon be improved.

Middle East

6.56 am

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): At the end of a long parliamentary day, I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for returning to the Chair for what is likely to be the last scheduled debate on the middle east and the Gulf before the expiry of the deadline set by the western powers of midnight, 15 January 1991, for Iraq to leave Kuwait.

I do not claim to speak in the debate on behalf of the parliamentary Labour party. However, 49 Labour Members either voted against or sponsored motions against the Government's support for the possible use of force, and therefore a substantial minority in the parliamentary Labour party is against the use of force. In the Labour party outside we are a bigger factor, and possibly even form a majority.

An opinion poll in *The Independent* about six days ago showed that 41 per cent. of Labour voters questioned about their attitude to a possible war in the Gulf insisted on the complete withdrawal of Iraq, even if that meant war. However, 49 per cent. opposed war. In the most recent polls conducted by the *New York Times* and CBS, 45 per cent. were in favour of war and 48 per cent. wanted more time for sanctions. The number of people opposed to war will increase, especially in America where people had the experience of Vietnam. War would result in horrific death and disfigurement. I shall deal with that later.

In the past few days the pendulum has swung between war and peace. Western hostages have been released—we were especially pleased to see the release of British hostages—but on the other hand there have been bellicose statements from leaders in America. It is ironic that on almost the last parliamentary day before Christmas and at this time of the year we should be considering what could be the most serious military conflict since the second world war.

In a number of meetings that I have had since 2 October, opposing the Government's support of possible war, I have begun each of those meetings as I begin my speech this morning, with a condemnation of the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the taking of hostages. I should have thought that that would go without question. However, the speeches that I have heard from leaders from all sorts of countries have the stench of hypocrisy. I think that it was Disraeli who said that a Tory Government was organised hypocrisy, so I suppose that I should not be too surprised.

We are now told that Iraq is in a direct line from Hitler. It went into a war in Iran. It invaded part of Iran and during the 1980s it received backing from those powers that today criticise its invasion of Kuwait. There were differences then. Iraq was seen as a moderating influence against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism after the Iranian revolution at the end of the 1970s. Because of that, in the 1970s and 1980s, France supplied $25,000 million worth of weapons to Iraq. America gave free intelligence from satellites, $5 billion worth of food subsidies and $2.5 billon of export guarantees. The Soviet Union provided huge amounts of armaments, as did Germany, Switzerland and others. Latterly, Britain was keen to have trade, including trade in weapons.

Therefore, the arms that allowed Iraq to build itself up to the point at which it could invade Kuwait, threaten to invade Saudi Arabia, and be in a stand-off against the

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army of the greatest military power that the world has ever seen—America—were largely built up by the western powers that today criticise Iraq.

I hope that those of my hon. Friends who are here, or who may read the report of the debate, will consider my next point. One of the tasks of the next Labour Government will be to stem the export of arms throughout the world. The middle east has been the most lucrative market for arms sales in recent decades. Half the oil revenues from all the Arab countries has been spent on battlefields in the past 40 or 50 years. That should stop. The Labour party should be considering closing the defence sales organisation. I speak as a Member of Parliament who represents a city—Coventry—which, with Bristol, has the highest number of factories dependent on arms jobs. My party should be considering public ownership of those firms and changing them to produce socially useful items instead of arms, which will end up on battlefields and, as we shall no doubt find all too soon, can be turned even against our young men and women. In such a big change, jobs must be guaranteed.

No doubt the Minister will repeat the points made earlier in the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), in which he said that Saddam Hussein is a dictator. I am astonished by the Government's seeming surprise at the Iraqi regime in Kuwait. The savagery of that regime has been known for many years, as has its treatment of its people, particularly the Kurdish minority. On 17 March 1988, Iraq bombed the Kurdish village of Halabja, and 5,000 people were killed. That was not unknown to the Government. When 10,000 died later in the year, in the villages north of Basra, which were bombed with chemical weapons, that was not unknown.

The hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), now the Secretary of State for Health, was then a junior Minister in the Foreign Office. He said that the Government were annoyed and upset and would be taking action. It was on 27 October 1988 that the Minister made a statement in which he said, for example, that the Government were against the use of chemical weapons. Ten days later, on 8 November, doors opened for increased trade with Iraq. A press statement was issued by the Department of Trade and Industry stating that the Government were offering an extra £400 million-worth of credits to British firms to increase trade with a regime that had so recently been condemned by the Foreign Office for the way in which it treated its citizens.

Yesterday, along with many other hon. Members, no doubt, I received material from the Free Kuwait campaign. One of the quotes in the material was from an Iraqi army captain who had deserted. He was interviewed on 14 November in Turkey, and he described the actions of the Iraqi troops in Kuwait. He said:

"It is like a butcher's shop."

I do not doubt that statement from the Iraqi captain or those made by the Free Kuwait campaign. I do not doubt what the Minister may quote when replying to the debate. The Amnesty International report of 19 December states that thousands have been killed or tortured, including over 300 premature babies. The same report tells us that while the brutality of the Iraqi forces has shocked many in Kuwait,

"such abuses have been the norm for people in Iraq for more than a decade."

We are not dealing with a regime that suddenly changed its spots on 2 August. It is a regime that has treated its citizens brutally within its own borders, and that has been known for many years.

I and several other hon. Friends and hon. Members representing other Opposition parties have tried to do our bit to support the campaign against repression and for democracy in Iraq—CARDI. In May 1989, 91 Members from six political parties tabled a motion that opposed Government financial support for 17 British firms at the Baghdad arms fair. We opposed that support because the firms were engaged in selling arms to a regime with an appalling human rights record. Not one Tory Member signed the motion, yet there is almost unanimity now among Tory Members on the human rights record of the Iraqi regime. The regime is not new; it is not something that has suddenly dropped out of the sky.

I still fear that there will be a war in the early part of the new year. It will not be a war about democracy. It will do the Government no good to refer, as the Minister probably will this morning, to the three main aims of the United Nations. One of the aims—the release of hostages—has been realised in recent days. The second is the complete withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, and the third is the restoration of the "legitimate" Government of Kuwait.

I do not regard the as-Sabah dynasty as particularly legitimate. Even before the invasion, there was precious little real democracy in Kuwait. Only 8.5 per cent. of the male population of Kuwait was entitled to a vote. That entitlement was restricted to those who could trace their lineage back to males who lived in Kuwait before 1920. They amounted to only 60,000 of the three quarters of a million Kuwaitis. That is besides the hundreds of thousands who originate from other countries who have lived in Kuwait all their lives. They include up to 1 million from Egypt. There are probably hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. There are many from the Philippines. There are about 75,000 Sri Lankan housemaids. These people had no democratic or civil rights. Women did not have the vote in Kuwait.

Even if 8.5 per cent. of the male Kuwaitis had the vote, that did not do much good. The emir abolished the national assembly in 1986 and it has not met since. Many thousands of people in Kuwait were slaves. The migrant workers had no real rights. Kuwait was one of the richest countries in the world with a notional $13,000 per head of population. There are 41 countries with per capita wealth of less than $300. I speak from memory, but I think that Mozambique is at the bottom of the list with $150. A country with a notional $13,000 per head is enormously rich. It was concentrated in a relatively small number of feudal families, rather than being distributed evenly among the population.

I know that the Minister will not like the repetition, but the crisis is not about democracy; it is about the strategic importance of oil and about the control by western powers —American and British—of the oil supplies. It is not just me saying that. The former American assistant secretary for defence, Lawrence Korb, said:

"What it amounts to is the great powers settling their interests. If Kuwait grew carrots, we wouldn't give a damn!"

That is the truth.

The *New York Times* says that America is interested in "cheap oil and stable monarchies."

I do not doubt that America wants to topple Saddam Hussein, but in favour of what? It is certainly not in favour of a better or fairer society. It is in favour of what *The Times* editorial described recently as another section of the Baghdad elite. In other words, it is an officers' coup; another secret policeman. As long as he tortures and murders, arrests and imprisons within the boundaries of Iraq, he will be allowed to do what he wants.

What does Iraq want out of this crisis? I do not think that it wants war. I agree that it wants the spoils of its invasion of Kuwait, in particular the part that includes the northern oilfield in Kuwait—the southern part of Iraq. It wants the two islands and it wants access to the waterway so that it can build a new Iraqi port. Anyone who looks at the map and understands the nature of the Gulf and the depth of the water will recognise the importance of that. Iraq wants to control an extra 20 per cent. of the world's oil reserves.

Even more important is the fact that because of the devastating war with Iran, when Iraq ran up huge debts of $300 billion, it wants an external diversion to take the attention of millions of people in Iraq away from the horrors of the future. Our Government complain about having to raise interest rates because inflation is about 10 per cent.; it is 300 per cent. in Iraq. In 1980, Iraq was receiving
$26 billion a year in oil revenues. By 1989 that had dropped to $14 billion. It is mainly for those economic and political reasons that Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Iraq grafts on to that an element of justification. I am not here as an appeaser or as an apologist. However, it was not Iraq that decided the boundaries. Most of the boundaries in the Arabian peninsula were carved up by Britain and France following the first world war.

I have read a few biographies of Sir Arnold Wilson, Sir Percy Cox and Lord Curzon. It was the pencil of Sir Percy Cox, drawing what has been described as a wavering line on an inaccurate map in 1922, that created the present-day boundaries of Kuwait. Churchill approved them. It was Lord Curzon who said that he wanted the Persian Gulf to be a British lake. It was Britain and France that put people like Faisal on the throne of Iraq and created the artefacts of Syria, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan and the Emirates after the fall of the Ottoman empire. That exacerbated the divisions between the Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims and the Maronite Christians and between the Druse and the Jews, which later created in Israel what one British commentator described as a loyal little Jewish Ulster.

That drawing of the map has for decades exacerbated the feelings of the Arab people that they were the playthings of the imperialist interests of France and Britain.

On the other side of the coin is the British and American legal justification. In case the Minister quotes from the United Nations resolutions, I can tell him that I have read all of them and the two documents published by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. The legal justification appears in article 51, in resolution 660 and in subsequent resolutions. It includes self-defence and Operation Desert Shield, being invited in by Saudi Arabia.

But those pale into insignificance in the light of the Turkish invasion and colonisation of Cyprus in 1974; after America went into Grenada, a Commonwealth country, into Libya, interfered in Nicaragua, or bombed and killed 7,000 people in Panama; or the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem and the west bank for the past 23 years. On 8 October, 21 Palestinians were killed and 150 badly injured in the police action at the Temple Mount, the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

There were five days of debate at the United Nations and at the end of that there was a decision to send three secretaries from the Secretary-General's office to carry out an investigation. What an insult. Why has no task force been sent to implement United Nations resolution 242? Could it be the unworthy idea that in growing olives and citrus fruits the Palestinians might not grow many carrots, in Lawrence Korb's words, but nor do they have any oil for America or Britain to worry about?

If the United Nations is such a worthy organisation, why is America $600 million in arrears on its subscriptions? Why do the Government do nothing—other than answer my parliamentary questions on occasions—about the reports and actions of the Israeli Government in the occupied territories?

I have read parts of Amnesty International's report and I agree that the actions of the Iraqi troops in Kuwait are horrible. I have mentioned some of them already. On 12 December the Minister told me and the House that the Government estimate that, since the outbreak of the intifada in the occupied territories just over three years ago, 858 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli defence forces, 58 deported and about 10,000 held in administrative detention. Figures for the wounded range from an Israeli estimate of about 13,000 to a Palestinian human rights information centre estimate of about 100,000. One quarter of those killed are children under the age of 16.

The Save the Children Fund—not a particularly left-wing organisation—described the composite picture of the average child killed by tear gas. It showed a Gaza refugee infant girl at home in bed when soldiers threw a tear gas canister into her room, causing immediate and extreme respiratory stress, cyanosis and heavy mucus discharge from the mouth and nose leading to death from asphyxia and circulatory failure within 12 hours. Where is the difference between the death of such a child in Gaza and the death of the children in Kuwait? Why do not the Government have the same attitude to the hostilities conducted against the Palestinian people and others such as the Kurds in the middle east as they have shown in the past few weeks towards Iraq?

The Government's policy has had consequences in the middle east and for workers in my constituency. Recently, Matrix Churchill, a company in Coventry, received encouragement to export to Iraq and is now paying the penalty after the United Nations resolutions. Under the sanctions, the company's ownership by the Iraqi secret service has caused many other companies not to deal with it and redundancies are the reward for the people of Coventry.

We appear to be moving in the next couple of weeks towards a Rubicon which we would cross for the first time for 50 years in terms of a war on a world scale. The consequences of that war would be horrific.

Given all that has been said in recent days, one cannot rule out successful negotiations, but still the British and American Governments, and the Iraqi dictator, appear to adopt entrenched positions. It seems unlikely that the substantial forces now in the Gulf will sit there doing nothing and rotting away for many more months.

The situation has developed over the months from an American demand that the Iraqis pull out of Kuwait to an

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insistence not only that Saddam Hussein must go, but that there should be something along the lines of the Nuremberg trials and the dismantling of weapons. That could be achieved only by both a military defeat of Iraq and military occupation of that country for months, if not years, thereafter.

A war would be horrific. Sir Peter de la Billiere talks of a swift war, and replying to me on 4 September, the Secretary of State for Defence spoke of an operation that would be "short, sharp and quick".

President Johnson was told the same at the beginning of the Vietnam war. He was assured that in 12 days the Vietcong's military depots could be bombed out of existence, yet 12 years later—after 350,000 bombing raids, the dropping of 8 million tonnes of bombs, and the loss of 57,000 American troops and 2 million Vietnamese—America was defeated.

Iraq does not possess the same kind of ragged, ill-equipped army that fought for North Vietnam in the 1960s, precisely because it has been so well-equipped by Russia, France, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, China, America and the rest.

This Christmas, 90,000 mince pies are being sent from Britain to the Gulf, together with 10,000 body bags. America is sending 100,000 body bags. The Pentagon has plans to send 800 gallons of blood a day to the Gulf, and it has made available 5,000 military beds. There are also three American navy hospitals. Described as prepacked and climatically controlled, they are said to offer the most sophisticated facilities in the world. Each has 500 beds, six operating theatres and 950 medical staff.

Think of the good that such a facility could do in Asia or Africa, or even nearer to home. About a week ago, the Prime Minister admitted to me that there are four American air force hospitals on former RAF sites in this country. One in the Cotswolds has 1,500 beds, with everything from the soap to the linen wrapped in plastic and ready for world war three—or perhaps now, for when war breaks out in the Gulf. Imagine how those facilities could have been used to shorten Britain's hospital waiting lists.

A war in the Gulf will not be "short, sharp and quick". The Pentagon estimates that 30,000 Americans and 90,000 Iraqi troops would be injured within the first 12 days. The French Defence Minister spoke of 100,000 injured. At the end of November, *The Daily Telegraph* wrote of hundreds of thousands of lives being lost on the Iraqi side, and *The Independent* estimated 400 British dead a day. Let us see what public opinion will be when those bodies arrive back at Northolt.

The most decorated American soldier in North Vietnam, Colonel David Hackworth, has spoken of 50,000 casualties in the first two weeks of a Gulf war, and Brigadier Patrick Cordingley was quoted in an article in the *Evening Standard* that appeared under the elegant headine,

"Prepare for a blood bath."

That is the prospect for the young men and women of Britain, America and Iraq if a war breaks out in the early weeks of 1991. That is the scale of the loss of life that could be the consequence of such a war.

Other consequences were touched on earlier, in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow. He spoke of the ecological repercussions if only 30 of 300 Kuwaiti oil wells apparently deep-mined by the Iraqis are destroyed. As to the use of chemical weapons, we learnt from Chernobyl of the years of distress that can result from one major explosion. We saw that in the hill areas of Wales and Scotland, as livestock died over a lengthy period. We saw enough of the results of the factory explosion at Bhopal to realise what a conflagration of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons could mean in the middle east.

The economic consequences should not be pushed aside as though they were less important than the loss of life. Many of the economic consequences for countries in the so-called third world and in eastern Europe could lead to a loss of life in a sharp winter. Poland spends 30 per cent. of its hard currency on oil, but in two weeks' time the USSR, which for many years has supplied oil at a subsidised price of $7 a barrel to the eastern bloc, will move to market prices in hard currency and will be charging $25 or $30 per barrel. According to Sheikh Yamani, the price will be more than $100 per barrel if there is a war. At a price of $25 per barrel Poland would have to spend 30 per cent. of its hard currency, Czechoslovakia 75 per cent. and Bulgaria 100 per cent. to buy the oil for this winter. At $30 per barrel, Czechoslovakia would spend 90 per cent. and Bulgaria would spend 120 per cent. of its hard currency reserves. That would be a body blow this winter for those newly emergent countries, coming out from under the yoke of Stalinism after 40 years into a "brighter" future. If there were a war they would be condemned to a winter in which thousands, or perhaps tens of thousands, of people would die of cold.

Three or four weeks ago a sub-committee of NATO spoke of the severe and catastrophic recession in eastern Europe, with the possibility of Chilean-style military regimes emerging because of its economic consequences. The impact throughout the rest of the world would be no less severe.

In Britain, in December the CBI news bulletin spoke of military experts that it had consulted suggesting that a war in the middle east would not be protected, and that the United States should be able to overwhelm Iraq. It said that in those circumstances, even if the production installations had been damaged, there was a good chance that a victory in the middle east could effectively break OPEC and leave secure supplies of relatively cheap oil for the latter part of the 1990s.

That may be a rosy scenario, but it shows the CBI's view of one of the main aims of a war—the breaking of the OPEC cartel and the securing of cheaper oil supplies in the 1990s. Lack of time prevents me from reading most of the report, which goes on to talk about the severe depression which would last for five or six years if there were a war and the oil price rose.

I do not have time to catalogue all of them, but in the ex-colonial, or so-called third world, many countries such as Bangladesh are entirely dependent for oil upon the middle east, and the remittances of about 450,000 workers from the Gulf have been stopped. One third of its foreign exchange earnings have been stopped because of the lack of earnings from migrant workers, who were formerly in the middle east, principally in Kuwait.

Uganda's oil bills will rise from $7 million to $10 million a month. Pakistan needs an extra $600 million to meet the oil price rises, and is losing an estimated $400

million in Gulf remittances. India has lost 40 per cent. of its normal oil sources and the remittances of 180,000 expatriates in Iraq and Kuwait.

A recession has already begun in this country and it could be speeded up and triggered in exactly the same way as the war between Israel and the Arab countries triggered the first of the 1970s recessions, and a similar major rise in the oil price towards the end of the 1970s triggered the recession which, between 1981 and 1983, cost my city almost 40,000 jobs in factories.

So the economic cost would be huge. I do not have enough time to develop the theme of the political costs in the middle east—not merely the ecological flames of war, but the political flames of revolution. I predict that especially in Egypt and Jordan, but possibly in other countries, some of the leaders who have tied themselves to the exhaust pipe of America's F111s because of the support that they have been getting in subventions from America will find that a war polarises the countries between the occidental and the oriental—as King Hussein put it—between the white north and the colonial arab peoples, between the imperialism of the oil companies and the Arab peninsula. When the position is seen in that context, some of those rulers may be toppled.

I am not one of those—they include people whom I respect as friends as well as political comrades—who have called for an extension, or even an implementation, of sanctions against Iraq. It is not a question of appeasement. Replying to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow, the Minister said that the destabilisation of Iraq was not happening fast enough because of sanctions. What that means, in cold terms, is that there is not enough pressure from the young, the old and the poor in Iraq to get rid of the leadership.

That is what sanctions are about. Saddam Hussein has been able to hide the preparations not only for chemical weapons but, according to the most recent edition of *The Sunday Times*, for nuclear weapons. Apparently they can be constructed within a year or 18 months: Saddam Hussein has been able to import from Coventry, the midlands, Germany and elsewhere the machine tools, lathes and milling machines that he needs to make the centrifuges and to turn the shell cases to be ready to develop nuclear weapons and to convert uranium to weapons grade uranium-235. If he can hide all that, he can certainly hide food supplies for himself, his family and the elite in Baghdad. They would not suffer from sanctions; the ordinary population would suffer.

I do not think that any worker in this country would want such action to be taken against working people in Iraq. He would, however, want action to be taken against the dictatorship, the army and the brutal oppressors of the state machine in Iraq.

I may be in the minority in the Labour party in that I have a jaundiced view—cynical, some might say—of the worth of the United Nations. I think of the United Nations as the Tory Governments of Britain, Germany, Italy, Japan and America; its members get together with the butchers of Tiananmen square, and suddenly they are all supposed to be liberal socialists. I do not think that that happens: I do not think that they change their spots when they leave this country, or any other European country, and become socialists overnight when they get to New York. Similarly, if I had a factory in Coventry where the workers were in dispute with the management I would not call in the CBI as an independent arbitrator, because I do not think that it represents interests other than those that it has always represented. I do not think that calling on the United Nations is the answer.

I want dictators like Saddam Hussein to be brought down, but in precisely the same way as the Stalinist dictators were brought down in eastern Europe—by the mass action of millions of people on the streets of Leipzig, Bucharest, Budapest and Prague. That task can be completed only by the Arab peoples in the middle east, who must rise up—with our support, where we can give it—and overthrow the dictators. Just as I think that we need a Labour Government in this country to solve the problems of working people, socialist, Labour and democratic Governments need to emerge in the middle east.

This is not a war about democracy. I know that many people in this country have realised for the first time just how bad is the dictatorship in Iraq. That is natural, when a paper such as the *Daily Mirror* is publishing headlines like that of 21 August, which quoted an unnamed Iraqi Government official as saying, "We'll eat your pilots". It is no wonder that working-class people think, "If that is what the regime is like, let us do all that we can to get rid of it."

With the possible exception of the elements of parliamentary democracy represented by the freedom of newspapers and civil rights that exist in "lesser" Israel, within the pre-1967 boundaries—not the occupied territories, and they do not exist for Arabs within the pre-1967 boundaries—no country in the middle east deserves that title, yet we have put all those British troops into Saudi Arabia. If the British people knew a tenth about what happens in the other countries of the middle east, they would probably want to go to war with all of them.

Saudi Arabia is run by a king. It does not have a Parliament. The king rules by absolute decree. Most of the Ministers are members of his family. Political parties are banned, as are elections. Executions take place regularly. Stoning to death is the sentence for adultery and the sentence for theft is amputation of a limb. How many mothers in this country would want their sons to die on the desert sands of Saudi Arabia if they knew that women there are not even allowed to drive cars?

Last July, over 1,500 pilgrims were killed in a tunnel in Mecca. King Fahd observed that the disaster was God"s will. He said:

> "Had they not died there, they would have died elsewhere at the same predestined moment."

That is the regime that British troops have been sent to defend. On 8 November the king promised that a consultative council would be set up. That promise was first made three kings ago, in 1962. However, the king will appoint the 50 male members of the consultative council. It will hardly be the most democratic of institutions.

The Minister will no doubt quote extracts from Amnesty International's report on Kuwait. I urge him to read the whole of Amnesty International's report—it is available in the Library—on Saudi Arabia. It refers to the 111 people who were executed, 16 of whom committed political offences, during the past 12 months. If that does not suit, I urge him to read the digest on human rights that *The Economist* published in 1986. I am not quoting from partial left-wing sources. The digest gave Saudi Arabia a human rights rating of 28 per cent.—one of the lowest in the world.

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

Syria is our new ally in this battle. Only two weeks ago the Foreign Secretary restored diplomatic relations with Syria and gave his seal of approval to that vicious, reactionary dictatorship. In 1982 Syria ordered the murder of 20,000 Muslims in the village of Homs. Syria's security police are no less effective than those of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Executions are carried out regularly, just as happens in Saudi Arabia.

If invasion is the criterion for going to war under United Nations resolutions, Syria invaded Lebanon on more than one occasion. It has also successfully invaded and colonised a substantial chunk of the Lebanon. It has created what President Assad calls "greater Syria." The Minister could have read about all that in Amnesty International's report or in *The Economist* digest.

There is a hereditary monarch in Jordan. For 22 years, until last year, there were no elections, but there were regular executions. I urge the Minister to read *The Economist* and Amnesty International reports. As for the emirates in the Gulf, all of them are feudal autocracies.

In the United Arab Emirates, seven absolute monarchs regularly carry out executions. The Emir of Qatar is an absolute monarch. He is also the Prime Minister. There is no Parliament and there are no political parties. The Sultan of Oman is head of state and has absolute powers. Executions are held regularly. Again, there are no political parties. Executions also take place regularly in the Yemen. North Yemen has an executive president who is elected by a 159-member constituent people's assembly. The president selects its members by presidential decree. Bahrain has an absolute monarch. Its last national assembly was abolished in 1975.

In Egypt there is an obscene contrast between business men who import Mercedes-Benz cars and pay £75,000 tax on them and the poor of Cairo who live and sleep in graveyards because they have no homes. The Minister can check such statements by referring to *The Economist* and Amnesty International reports. Plenty of things need to be changed in the middle east. If the press here had devoted the same amount of time, energy and attention to those problems as has been devoted to Iraq during the past four or five months, the working people of this country would want action to be taken against those countries, too, so that their brothers and sisters could be released from the dictatorships under which they live. It is the job not of tanks, planes, boats or armies up to 1 million strong to solve these problems but of the people of the region.

I hope that there is no war. If war breaks out, I shall demand in the House that this country does not send a bomb or a bullet to it and withdraws its troops. Not a young man or woman from this country, America or Iraq should die on the sands of the middle east for this war over oil and the strategic interests of the western powers. The Labour movement should have an independent position. I know that I am in the minority in believing that, but I am confident that in the weeks ahead that argument will gain more ground.

I hope that when we have a change of Government and a new United Kingdom policy on the middle east we shall play a little part in establishing fairer, better, more democratic and, I hope, socialist societies in the region which will co-operate and build a federal future that will recognise the rights of minorities, be they Jews, Kurds, Palestinians, Kuwaitis or Arabs. I hope that they will guarantee national and democratic rights in the region. War will not do those things. I know that there will be no vote at the end of the debate, but I am grateful for the opportunity to place my point of view before the House in opposition to the war that I fear is coming.

7.40 am

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): With the leave of the House, I shall intervene again. I recall, rather hazily, speaking earlier. I have not changed my views since that time and nor, I suspect, has the Minister after nocturnal reflection.

It may sound a little hollow to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) at this hour of the morning after a long night, but I do so. He made many points well. He referred, for example, to the nature of the Iraqi regime. He mentioned the Kurds, his membership of the campaign against repression and for democracy in Iraq, which I have been linked with, and gave a long exposé of the deficiencies of that regime.

It is an interesting case study that the hostility of western and world opinion can suddenly be against Iran, as the source of all evil in the region, but then switch to Iraq. One sees a similar transformation in relation to Syria. My hon. Friend made that point well.

My hon. Friend spoke of the civil rights deficiencies of the countries involved. He spoke of the importance of oil, but the importance of oil is not so much the interests of the western countries as the fact that, on 2 August, Saddam Hussein marched into an oil-rich neighbour—one of the greatest acts of perfidy in recent times, given the lack of warning and the way in which he had said that he wanted to negotiate. However, the so-called volunteers marched into Kuwait and now he seeks to obliterate a sovereign country recognised by the United Nations and previously was recognised by Iraq. That is the uniqueness of the case.

My hon. Friend made good points about selectivity, the nature of the regimes, and so on, but he sees the trees and misses the wood, which includes the uniqueness of the invasion and, perhaps more important, the significance of the response of world opinion to Iraq's invasion on 2 August. Whether the international community succeeds in this test case will have fundamental effects on international relations in years to come.

It is clear that, in the past 40 years, the middle east has been the flashpoint of the world. Whatever generalisations can be made about improved international relations and the prospects for peace in southern Africa, Cambodia, central America, Afghanistan, or wherever, they are followed by the qualification, "with the exception of the middle east". If the international community can assist in establishing a more stable and peaceful order in that region, it could address the problems of other regions where the problems are not so fundamental as those of the middle east.

The immediate problem facing the world community is the Gulf war. If the United Nations succeeds, it will have an enhanced authority and that added credibility will enable it to address other seemingly intractable problems in the hot spots of the world. It is vital for the international community to succeed. My colleagues and I do not accept the strictures that my hon. Friend addressed to the United Nations. We believe that it is the best hope for the world.

If the United Nations and the international community fail in the Gulf, their authority will be reduced and international anarchy will be given a substantial boost.

My hon. Friend has identified the problems associated with Palestine and Lebanon. It is possible for people to argue that the international response to those problems has been selective. I must remind my hon. Friend, however, that United Nations resolution 242 does not refer to the self-determination of the Palestinians.

I agree with my hon. Friend that there is never a right time to attempt to solve all the problems of the middle east. I share my hon. Friend's concern at the policy of the Israeli Government. We are extremely critical of the current and threatened deportation of Palestinians from the occupied territories, which is in clear breach of international agreements and conventions.

If the United Nations is to make an impact in the middle east, it can do so only when the Security Council resolutions in respect of Iraq have been fully complied with. If the United Nations fails in that, it will be in no fit state to consider the other problems of the region. Failure to resolve those problems is one of the great tragedies of the middle east, but there are now prospects for improvement.

My hon. Friend will be aware that the Labour party has pressed for an international conference covering all the problems of the middle east, including justice and self-determination for the Palestinian people. We want the long ordeal of the Palestinian refugees to end and security for all states in the region, including Israel. We also want the torment in Lebanon to cease. We share my hon. Friend's strong argument in favour of the removal of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons from the entire middle east.

That international conference can take place only under the auspices of a United Nations which emerges with credit from the Gulf crisis. For that reason, we look forward to the full implementation of the Security Council resolutions. If the United Nations does not succeed, despite our earnest hopes, we fear the consequences for the world.

7.49 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): This is the second time that we have discussed this subject during the debates. I should like to begin my remarks as I began my response to the earlier debate by stating that the views expressed by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and those which I wish to express are wholly identical. I am glad that Opposition and Government Front-Bench Members share a common position on the matter.

Although it is the second debate on the subject, this is a different debate. Therefore, it is right that I should summarise where we stand. We should begin by reminding ourselves of what Saddam Hussein has done. As the hon. Member for Swansea, East said, an act of aggression of the most perfidious and gross nature has been committed. On 2 August Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, a sovereign state and his neighbour, with which he had been in negotiations and to which he had given assurances of non-aggression. Many people were killed in the invasion. After the invasion was complete, he embarked on a systematic policy of oppression, murder, pillage and—it now seems—torture. That is the Government with which we are dealing.

To that challenge the United Nations responded in an impressive and powerful manner. A series of resolutions were passed, culminating in resolution 678, which contain three essential conditions: the immediate release of the hostages who were being held when resolution 678 was passed; complete and unconditional withdrawal from the state of Kuwait by 15 January; and the restoration of the lawful Government of Kuwait. Of those three conditions, one has been largely fulfilled—the release of the hostages. The other two conditions have not been but must be fulfilled. I wish to make it plain that the resolution is not a timetable for war. It provides ample time for withdrawal. But it requires and provides for complete and unconditional withdrawal by 15 January. Nothing short of complete and unconditional withdrawal will do. If Saddam Hussein does not withdraw completely and unconditionally by 15 January, he will be driven out by force. We hope for peace. We shall do all that in conscience we can do, but we shall not hesitate to use force if it is required in order to implement the Security Council resolutions.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) made many points, and I shall seek to respond to them. First, he focused on trading relations with Iraq. If he will forgive me for saying so, he has either misunderstood or somewhat misrepresented the position. Since 1985 or thereabouts there has been a total prohibition on the sale of arms to Iraq. Before that time a restricted regime governed the sale of arms to Iraq. It is perfectly true that there has not been a prohibition on the sale of non-military products, but then again we trade with many, indeed all, nations. We positively disagree with many of them. Merely to have ordinary non-military trading relations with a country in no way implies support for the regime or approval of its policies. It is simply to have ordinary trading relations with a country.

The second point on which the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East focused was this. He criticised the nature of the regimes in Kuwait, in Saudi Arabia—indeed, in most, if not all, the Gulf states. It is perfectly true that the regimes that he described are not the kind of regimes to which we are accustomed in western Europe. It is perfectly true that they are not democracies or truly accountable Governments in western terms. Some may well agree between themselves that it would be desirable if they were different, but the plain truth is that the nature of the regimes in those parts of the world is intrinsically and essentially a matter for the people living there and not for us. The fact that one may not like the regime in Kuwait is not a reason for saying that we must not oppose military aggression against that state or not seek to reverse the aggression that has been committed against it. In the end, the people of each country in the area must determine the nature of their own political system.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East said that the argument was exclusively about oil. He is entirely wrong about that. If the issue was primarily about oil, we would have settled it in some way or other. It is manifestly undesirable for Saddam Hussein to have the oil resources of Kuwait and Iraq because that will enable him in the long term to distort the oil markets in various ways; but we would not contemplate the use of force for that reason. Perhaps more to the point, the many Arab states that have

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

deployed forces in Saudi Arabia would not contemplate the use of force for that reason. Notwithstanding the fact that the world is currently deprived of oil from both both Kuwait and Iraq, oil supplies are adequate to meet our present requirements.

The hon. Gentleman focused on the fact that the United Nations has not been wholly successful in the past in dealing with acts of aggression and concluded that it would therefore by hypocritical and wrong to try to meet the act of aggression that has taken place. I agree with him that there have been imperfections and that in the past the United Nations has failed to do what we would have liked it to do. The present situation presents a particular challenge because it involves the first exercise of collective will in the post cold war world.

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Swansea, East that, if we do not stand behind the United Nations at this critical moment in its development, it is difficult to believe that it will ever have any authority in future. If the United Nations has no authority, we shall have the prospect of international anarchy.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East referred to the position in Palestine. I accept—I think that we all now accept—that there is unfinished business in Palestine and that it is unquestionably a flashpoint on which we must focus. But there is no linkage between what has happened in Kuwait and the problems of Palestine. It is true that, once we have secured the withdrawal of Saddam Hussein —completely and unconditionally—we must turn our attention to the business of Palestine. We must do all that we can to achieve two strategic objectives—first, the right to self-determination for the people of Palestine, and, secondly, the integrity and security of the state of Israel.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East spoke passionately about the beastliness and horror of war. War is, indeed, a beastly and horrible business and it is wholly unpredictable. Nevertheless, from time to time in history, one must be prepared to use force to maintain the world order and, in this case, to enforce the collective will of the United Nations.

If the hon. Gentleman is wholly honest with himself, he will recognise that nothing that he said in 50 minutes or so offered any solution to the problem. He made it plain that he rejected sanctions as being inappropriate. He said that he thought that the United Nations was an irrelevance of which he disapproved. His only solution was to call on the peoples of Iraq to pull down Saddam Hussein. He could have said that at any time during the eight years of the war with Iran, or to the people of Nazi Germany or Stalin's Russia, but he would have done so to no avail. Were we to follow the hon. Gentleman's policy, nothing would happen, Kuwait would continue to be oppressed and Saddam Hussein would continue to threaten the peoples of the middle east and to arm himself. That is not something that we can accept.

It being Eight o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to Order [13 December], without Question put.

Basildon (Transport)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

8 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I am conscious of my good fortune in being able to raise on the Adjournment motion a matter of great importance to my constituents —transport to and from Basildon. I recognise the keenness of my hon. Friend the Minister for Shipping and Public Transport to be here to respond for the Government to the points that I raise on behalf of my constituents.

I am grateful for the opportunity to comment briefly on the Department of Transport because for 18 months I was involved in the workings of that Department as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of State with responsibility for public transport and other matters. During that time, I served with a number of Ministers who acquitted themselves in their offices with great distinction. In particular, I recognise the invaluable work done by my right hon. Friends the Ministers for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), both of whom, in their different styles, led the Department extremely well. In time to come, the general public will benefit immeasurably from their great efforts and courageous decisions as Secretaries of State for Transport. I pay tribute to the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities who, as Minister with responsibility for public transport, tapped many an untried source to get more money into the Department in terms of public finance. I also remember warmly the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who left his mark in terms of road safety. I shall refer later to a great contribution that he made in my constituency. Towards the end of my time at the Department, my hon. Friend the present Minister for Sport conducted a meeting with the leader of the Conservative group in the highways department of Essex county council who, I know, listened carefully to the points that we raised about the allocation that Essex was to get.

Drawing on my time in the Department, I cannot think of any sector of Government policy where our economic successes have bitten more deeply than in transport. It is clear that many more people than ever before now use cars, British Rail, London Underground, buses and taxis, and fly. That is a direct result of the success of the Government's economic policies. At the same time, the increased use of transport created many problems for Transport Ministers. I can think of no sphere in which there is a more parochial insight into Government operations than that of transport.

Hon. Members were keen to have more trains, so long as the new lines did not run through their constituencies. They were keen on road improvements, so long as the road works did not disrupt the traffic in their constituencies. They were keen to enjoy more flights, so long as the extension of runways did not increase noise over their areas. I make no apology for being guilty of the same sin of parochialism today.

No town has seen more changes in transport than Basildon. It was mentioned in the Doomsday book, so although it is the oldest and largest new town in the country, it goes back a long way. At the turn of the century it consisted only of quiet roads and lanes. The pioneers who built the town after the second world war built most

of the roads barely wide enough to take one car. Now we live in an age when young people no longer save up to acquire their first banger at the age of 17. They automatically have cars, and many families own two or three. That has added to congestion on the roads of Basildon.

My hon. Friend the Minister can relax. I do not intend to subject British Rail to a harangue today. I am pleased to report from the sources that I consulted before this debate that, since the timetable changes in May this year, there have been real improvements in the quality of service on the Fenchurch Street line. Ministers with responsibility for British Rail have willingly and sadly acknowledged that the Fenchurch Street line compares unfavourably with all other heavily used commuter lines.

I have, however, a few complaints to record this morning. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) has for many years brought to the attention of the House the difficulties that commuters in his constituency have experienced, but Basildon has suffered even more.

I want first to praise the services at the three stations in Basildon—Pitsea, Laindon and Basildon itself. The staff do a wonderful job in difficult circumstances and have coped very well with the changes instigated by British Rail since May. Pitsea station has a village atmosphere. The staff are popular with the commuters and usually win the annual garden contest conducted by British Rail. It is important to recognise such small points. The staff remain courteous in the face of irate commuters.

We have an excellent commuter group in Basidon. It held a public meeting last year when the manager of Network SouthEast addressed an often hostile audience and dealt fairly with questions. I am delighted to tell the House that the chairman of the commuter group says that the present timetable is the best that we have ever had, although obvious revisions are necessary. We need three, not the present two, trains during the daytime for Laindon and Pitsea. That is not an awful lot to ask. Network SouthEast obtains more revenue from Basildon, Pitsea and Laindon than it obtains from stations on any other part of the line. The chairman of my commuter group thinks that British Rail should show more imagination by raising money through exploiting the assets of the system. That could be done by advertising on trains, sponsorship, letting, or general new ideas. I was shown around the three stations by the new public relations man and told about the expansion of car parking space at Pitsea railway station. We need more details about that. If my hon. Friend the Minister cannot provide them now, perhaps the Minister of State will provide them in writing.

I was told that in this new atmosphere of enterprise there would be more commercial opportunities to improve the facilities at our three stations. So far, there has been no evidence of that. I agree with my ever-expanding commuter group that there are opportunties to improve the facilities at our three stations. I hope that better quality toilets and waiting facilities can be provided. We should not give in to vandalism, and my constituents have every right to enjoy the most comfortable service that can be provided.

The Basildon commuter group has criticised staffing levels and maintains that the higher the staffing levels the more people are reassured. Many commuters write to me complaining about the frequency of points freezing on the Fenchurch Street line. That means that trains are cancelled and the commuter's excuse to his boss that he has missed the train begins to wear a little thin. The Minister may say that if people got up earlier they could overcome such problems, but extra effort should be expended on that line.

Fenchurch Street has a magnificent revamped station, thanks to the Government's investment in the line, and when new signalling and new carriages come on stream, the system will be further improved. Perhaps the Minister will tell us about any further improvements envisaged for that line. I and my colleagues in Essex applauded the introduction of the penalty fares scheme on the Fenchurch Street line. It will benefit my constituents if we can recoup the money that is lost because of fare dodging.

I recently heard from some constituents, who are clearly not fare dodgers but who seem to have been penalised unfairly. One of them told me in a letter that when his annual season ticket was left at home he was asked to pay a £10 penalty fare. He had understood from an announcement by the Department that anyone with a valid excuse would not be expected to pay the penalty fare. The Department's spokesman also said that British Rail was not after honest people but was out to catch fare dodgers. With that in mind, my constituent refused to pay the £10 penalty but said that he was willing to pay for a return fare which could be reclaimed at a later date.

The ticket inspector maintained that my constituent had travelled without a ticket and was therefore liable for the penalty. After much argument, and on being told that he was making a fuss over nothing because he could later reclaim the money, my constituent agreed to pay the £10 fine. He was given an envelope and supplied with the address to which to send his complaint. Having been given this assurance, my constituent then agreed to pay the rail fare.

However, it then occurred to my constituent that he needed a ticket to get home, and the inspector saw fit to tell him this only after he had gone back to check the matter. My constituent phoned British Rail's customer relations department. He was amazed to learn not only that what had happened was correct but that forgetting a ticket was not a valid excuse. Therefore, he would not be able to get a refund on the £10 penalty. Had my constituent realised that he had forgotten the ticket before he travelled, he could have bought a ticket at the station and claimed it back later.

I do not want to bore the House on this subject, but it is nonsense for British Rail to behave in this way. I am sure that the aim of the penalty fare scheme is to attack fare dodgers. It was not meant to penalise honest people, such as my constituent. Goodness knows, we are all capable of loss of memory. Sometimes, I can hardly remember the names of my children, so the fact that my constituent forgot his season ticket once in four years of commuting on the Fenchurch Street line hardly makes it fair that he should have to pay not only the £10 penalty but the extra fare. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will look at that problem.

With regard to roads, I must begin by praising the chairman of the highways committee on the council, Mr Ron Williams, who came with me to the meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) that I mentioned earlier, asking for extra resources for roads in Essex. He came to the House a few weeks ago and met all hon. Members representing Essex constituencies at a fruitful meeting. We brought concerns to his attention, and in a short time he has already acted on them.

[Mr. David Amess]

I have another question for the Minister. Again, if he does not have the details, perhaps he or his colleague will write to me about the A127. When I reported a tragic accident, in which a young child ran out of school across the A127 and was killed, my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham ordered the installation of crash barriers all the way along the A127. I am sure that that has saved many lives, but we also now need barriers on the A13, particularly near the Blue House farm. This is a dangerous area, and my constituents would be grateful if we could have crash barriers there.

We have the largest shopping centre in Europe, and the Round Acre roundabout has been completed. That has made shopping in Basildon this Christmas a delight. No one should be put off travelling to Basildon to get his Christmas goodies. The Round Acre roundabout works have been completed, and traffic flows are excellent. However, I should be interested to hear from my hon. Friend any details about the Fortune of War roundabout. There is some confusion about what is happening about the flyover there, and some delay in the opening of the roundabout.

It is no small thing to ask my hon. Friend the Minster whether we could have slightly better road signing. A few years ago, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) was kind enough to improve the road signing of the M25/A127. We should have the "Nuclear free zone" signs taken down, and instead Basildon should have one or two nice signs saying, "Welcome to Basildon". Furthermore, there is no driving test centre at Basildon. My constituents have to travel to Hornchurch or Southend. When I have raised the matter before with the Department of Transport, it has been said that road conditions are not difficult enough in Basildon to warrant the provision of a centre. I think that that is clap-trap. There are all sorts of road conditions in Basildon and it is about time that we had our own test centre.

As for buses, the Eastern National Bus Company is doing an excellent job. The market has been freed and my constituents are enjoying facilities that are bettered by none. The company ran a bus route which passed along Halstow way when there was no great demand from my constituents, and I am concerned that it seems to be doing that again with a route which includes Emmanuel road and Vowler road. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will take that on board.

The taxi and private car-hire owners in Basildon do an excellent job. I have the privilege to be the president of the Basildon taxi and licensed private hire fund for children, which in only four years has raised £20,000. It organises charity runs to Clacton and it has organised a Christmas show each year. It is taking socialist-controlled Basildon district council to the High Court because there are only 83 licensed hackney carriage owners and 300 licensed private hire cars. The fund does not believe that the council has issued enough hackney carriage licences.

I have referred briefly to some transport difficulties in Basildon. I can say with confidence that Basildon is the finest new town in the country and the finest town in the south-east. It has excellent communications. There is an airport and an excellent road infrastructure thanks to the Commission for the New Towns and the Government's excellent policies. Basildon welcomes the single market in 1992. Basildon means business. Basildon will welcome any business people. They certainly should not be put off coming to the town through any traffic delays.

8.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on securing the debate on the Adjournment. He rightly referred to his long period of work in the Department of Transport. During that time he was not able to raise transport matters on the Floor of the House, but he used forums other than the House to raise them with assiduity and vigour. I am sure that his constituents know that. Indeed, he opened this debate at an early hour this morning and talked about the opportunities that come with certain infrastructures and Government investment. I shall try to deal with all the matters that he raised. If a shortage of time precludes me from taking up some of them, I shall write to my hon. Friend in due course about specific problems.

I realise that for Basildon and the rest of south Essex the Fenchurch Street line is an important link. Many commuters depend on it to get into and out of London in the morning and evening. For some time, the service on the line has not been as good as British Rail, the Government and the passengers on the line would like it to be. I was pleased, however, to hear about the improvements of recent months to which my hon. Friend referred.

Our joint commitment to achieving a modern, efficient service throughout the network is not in doubt. Over the past few years, there has been a prolific increase in the number of commuters using the railways. Since 1983, the number of peak-time arrivals in London has increased by 23 per cent. so that now almost half a million people arrive in London by train every weekday. The amount of money being invested in Network Southeast has also risen dramatically. Over the next three years, NSE will be spending £1.3 billion on new rolling stock and associated infrastructure improvements such as electrification and resignalling. This should bring about a significant improvement in the standard of rail services in the south-east.

As far as the Fenchurch Street line is concerned, peak punctuality and reliability is improving this year but is not yet at a satisfactory standard. On a more positive note, however, it is pleasing that, last year, the level of overcrowding fell considerably compared with 1988.

The existing resources that Network SouthEast has to operate the service on the Fenchurch Street line are out of date. The trains are some of the oldest on the network and it is also time for the signalling to be renovated. I can assure my hon. Friend that both British Rail and the Government are keen to see the complete upgrading of the line. At present NSE is working up plans completely to replace the rolling stock fleet and to resignal the entire route. Those new trains will be a version of the new generation networker trains which will be coming into service from the end of next year on lines through south London and north Kent to relieve overcrowding and improve service quality. In the short term, more modern stock is coming to the Fenchurch Street line from the West Anglia and Great Eastern lines to replace the unreliable rolling stock currently used for off-peak services.

The news is not all bad on the Fenchurch Street line. One notable event this year was the community policing experiment. That provided additional British Transport police to give a high profile train and station presence. The results are extremely encouraging. Crime of all sorts has been reduced and travellers' perceptions of personal safety have been improved. NSE is now evaluating the experiment in more detail and considering how it might be extended to other parts of the network.

My hon. Friend has already mentioned penalty fares, which were authorised by Parliament last year. A pilot scheme came into operation on the Fenchurch Street line at the end of October. The line was chosen because it was considered to be best equipped to safeguard the honest customer with staffed booking offices and ticket machines at every station. The scheme has been very successful at catching and deterring fare dodgers. NSE tells me that it has been flexible in dealing with passengers who have left their season tickets at home. However, I am disturbed to hear of the case mentioned by my hon. Friend. The first time it happens—and for a limited period—NSE's penalty fares office has decided to waive the penalty. If the pilot scheme continues to be successful, it will be extended to other parts of the network in order to recoup the estimated £35 million that it loses each year from dishonest travellers. That £35 million is the equivalent of 18 new trains. My hon. Friend fairly said that people who dodge fares dodge others out of a better service. As I said, I am disturbed to hear about the case that he raised, and I shall investigate it.

My hon. Friend is no doubt aware that the specific road matters that he raised are for the local highway authority, Essex county council or the Commission for the New Towns, which he should approach for details of plans or timings for any works.

The flyover scheme close to the Fortune of War roundabout was promoted by Basildon new town, now the Commission for the New Towns. Once the commision has completed the connections to the local highway network at either end, the Department will publish the necessary orders to eliminate the roundabout. The Five Bells roundabout is part of an Essex county council scheme that has been accepted by the Dept for transport supplementary grant for 1991-92. Work at Roundacre in Basildon was promoted by the Commission for the New Towns. The Department has no details about it, but understands that the work, comprising roundabout improvement, is now largely complete, and that, I am sure, is welcome.

My hon. Friend raised the issue of road signalling, and especially his wish for "Welcome to Basildon" signs to be erected. I can certainly understand his wish if all that there is at the moment is a sign saying that Basildon is a nuclear-free zone—whatever that means. My hon. Friend no doubt wants a more positive approach to Basildon. He is noted for his positive approach to the town that he represents, which contrasts with the whingeing that we hear from local authorities when they run down their towns. My hon. Friend has been positive about the benefits of his constituency. When anyone mentions his name in the House, instantly the thought of Basildon leaps to mind. I assure him that should proposals for the signs that he wants be put forward the Department will certainly give sympathetic consideration to them. I am glad that the local highway authority is not under the control of those who run the local district council.

I hope that, from what I have said this morning, my hon. Friend will accept that we have recognised some of the problems that he described and that the Department and British Rail are trying to bring about the necessary improvements.

On my hon. Friend's point about crash barriers on the A127, I hope that he will understand that I want to study that proposal, and the experience that he described, in more detail. If he thinks that crash barriers at other sites would be of considerable benefit, I shall also carefully consider that proposal. I shall write to my hon. Friend with full details once we have studied the matter.

I would rather not comment on the question of taxis and hackney carriages. I am sure that my hon. Friend understands that, because there is a case outstanding in the courts which would be best settled by the courts, it would be wrong of me to comment.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 20 December 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Leukaemia Patients (University Hospital of Wales)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. John M. Taylor.]*

9.34 am

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I am delighted to have this opportunity to debate the subject of the treatment of leukaemia patients at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff, which is the only bone marrow transplant facility in Wales. I am also pleased to provide the new Under-Secretary of State for Wales with his first opportunity of gripping the Dispatch Box while the House is in Session. I am sure that one of the reasons why he was promoted to that hallowed position was his tremendously useful contribution as a member of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, of which I am proud to be the Chairman.

Huge steps have been taken in a short time to improve the life chances of our fellow human beings who contract the terrible disease of leukaemia. Until about 10 years ago, the vast majority of people would die from that disease within a few months. Fortunately, recent advances, including bone marrow transplantation, mean that many patients with leukaemia can now look forward to a cure.

Paragraph 49 of the document on cancers launched yesterday by the Under-Secretary states:

"a rise in the use of bone marrow transplants will decrease death from haematological malignancies."

I was also pleased to read in a publication on cancers produced yesterday by the Welsh Health Planning Forum the acknowledgement, on page 7, that survival rates for many cancers five years after diagnosis are improving, especially for the leukaemias.

However, the medical staff working at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff, face difficult problems in treating seriously ill patients under their care. I first became aware of the problems through the sad loss of a young man to a family in my constituency whom I knew well and then through discussions with the senior doctor looking after those patients at the University hospital of Wales.

When I checked through the public expenditure White Paper and through the Welsh Office commentary published in March this year to assess the level of Welsh Office funding, I was surprised to find that those sources gave no assistance in quantifying the funding by the Welsh Office of this regional service. On 24 October, in the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, I raised the issue with the Secretary of State, and I reiterate my request here. I ask that a meeting take place between the Secretary of State and the consultant in charge of the unit to discuss the changes necessary to improve patients' treatment.

The fundamental point to be addressed is the fact that there are only 18 beds in a treatment ward for the whole range of haematology services, The beds are not ragionally funded and are not all dedicated for occupation by patients requiring bone marrow transplantation. The ward includes patients with a wide variety of haematological conditions, including haemophilia. The patients on the wards are not only those who are suffering from leukaemia who are waiting for bone marrow transplantation.

The existing haematology unit should have a minimum of 25 beds, with a high proportion of beds being in single cubicles because of the dangerously high risk of cross-infection. That number is the minimum needed and would eliminate the shortage of beds, which has meant that patients have been discharged earlier than their medical condition warranted.

Because of the continuum of care from pre-treatment to transplants, only the transplant is regionally funded. The underfunding of the pre-transplant phase is markedly reducing the effectiveness of the unit. The removal of that segmentation of funding is vital in order to improve the standard of care.

Prior to bone marrow transplantation, leukaemia patients require intensive treatment. It makes no sense for that treatment to be funded differently from the treatment provided when bone marrow transplantation occurs. I want now to identify the problem areas that arise from that unsatisfactory system of funding.

First, the senior doctor is currently not permitted by the unit manager at University hospital of Wales to prescribe certain drugs which, in the doctor's clinical judgment, are necessary for the treatment of certain kinds of leukaemia. Because of cost, a crazy situation arises in which a patient cannot be prescribed the drug alpha interferon, for example—I emphasise that that is only one example—by the regional specialist at his unit in Wales, but the same patient can be perscribed that drug by a consultant haematologist outside the South Glamorgan district health authority area.

One patient, who in the consultant's view and in his clinical judgment, should have been treated with alpha interferon was denied that treatment from the budget of the University hospital of Wales. However, the leukaemia research appeal chaired by my constituent Mr. Bernard Lewis for Llangennith provided the money to pay for the drug. I have a copy of the invoice from the pharmacy department of the University hospital of Wales for two months' supply of interferon paid for by the appeal in August. Two months' supply of the drug costs well over £300. Will people in Wales and Britain soon see pleas on their television screens and in their newspapers for anyone to provide life-prolonging drugs denied them through the nation health service?

Consultants have been able to cushion the effects of drug cost limitations by persuading GPs to perscribe the drugs. Now GPs throughout the country are deciding on legal advice that they cannot continue that practice. Specifically, a general medical practitioner who prescribes a drug at a consultant's request, which the GP would not normally be able to monitor on the basis of his own expertise and practice facilities, places himself in a position where he could be liable for an action for negligence.

Furthermore, the GP could be regarded as being in breach of his terms of service and liable to disciplinary proceedings. That view is based on an interpretation of paragraph 36 of schedule 1 to the National Health Service (General Medical and Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 1974 which requires a GP to

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

"order any drugs . . . which are needed for the treatment of any patient to whom he is providing treatment under these terms of service by issuing to that patient a prescription form, and such a form shall not be used in any other circumstances." Therefore, a GP could be held not to be providing treatment in some cases, for that treatment is being provided by the hospital consultant with the GP acting merely as a facilitator to provide drugs.

Through correspondence with a GP in my constituency, I have been alerted to the same situation regarding the drug erythropoeitin which is used for the effective treatment for the anaemia of chronic renal failure. I use the example erythropoeitin to show that GP's awareness of the possibility of negligence claims is not simply confined to the treatment of leukaemia patients. That is why I am beginning to be haunted by the spectre of patients, including children, begging for prescribed drugs. I hope that the Minister will be able to comfort me with good Christmas cheer and guarantee that that spectre is completely unfounded and that the Government would never allow it to happen.

Specifically, I should like the Minister to accept that if a cancer treatment service is to be run satisfactorily, all the drugs that the clinician deems necessary for the treatment of his patients should be available to the unit including alpha interferon and similar substances such as aclarubicin and idarubicin. It is also important that the clinician is able to add to his armoury the new drug regimens that emerge and which will continue to improve cancer treatment. That is mentioned in paragraph 48 of the Welsh Health Planning Forum publication on cancers.

My second area of concern relates to the uncertainty about the availability of an anaesthetist for the bone marrow transplant programme. The department of anaesthetics at the University hospital of Wales has had to reduce its work load because of the non-filling of consultant and clinical assistant posts by the chief administrative medical officer for the South Glamorgan district health authority.

Bone marrow transplantation is not one of the specialties that are exempt from those cuts. In the rescheduling of anaesthetics lists there have been only two protected services—the provision of anaesthetic time at Rhydlafar for the treatment centre and anaesthetic services to provide cardiac surgery in accordance with achieving the target quota of operations.

In practice, therefore, even though bone marrow transplantation is a regional service which funds a weekly session for an anaesthetist, the policy of the University hospital of Wales of cancelling theatre sessions because of the non-availability of hospital anaesthetic staff has been extended to bone marrow transplantation.

I hope that the Minister will accept that the planning for a patient to receive a bone marrow transplant from a donor takes many weeks. In the last two weeks, cytotoxic drugs are administered to the patient and marrow is taken from the donor. If the transplant is cancelled at that stage, there is a potential danger to the patient. There is deep concern that, unless greater certainty can be introduced about the availability of anaesthetists, patient survival may be jeopardised.

The third and final problem area that I want to identify is nursing. There is a major problem with the inadequate number of nurses available to nurse leukaemia patients. Nurses who have special training in oncology or leukaemia care are graded staff nurse or a sister and only five of the staff are in those grades. Those five nurses are expected to cover the two day-time shifts totalling over 13 hours. This means that, at any one time, there will not be more than two or three fully trained nurses for a ward which often has 18 very sick patients.

I hope that the Minister can accept that a regionally funded unit vertically integrated from pre-treatment ward to transplant and post-transplant treatment is the way to eradicate the problems which I raised.

9.50 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Bennett): I thank the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) for his kind remarks on my first appearance at the Dispatch Box in my new role. I appreciated his comments. I also appreciated his chairing of the Select Committee of which I was a member for three and a half years. I have always found the hon. Gentleman to be fair-minded and sensible on issues that are not matters of party political controversy. I shall reply to his comments in a similar manner.

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on obtaining this debate on an important subject—the treatment of leukaemia patients—which is of concern to all hon. Members. I welcome the opportunity that the debate provides to set out the progress that is being made to help those people in our community who are unfortunate enough to have contracted this dreadful disease.

It may be helpful if I begin by explaining the all-Wales context for health service expenditure. The revenue funding made available to district health authorities in Wales has risen £267·033 million in 1978-79 to £945·401 million in 1990-91—an increase in real terms, after taking account of inflation, of 44·87 per cent. In 1991-92, spending is planned to rise to £1·188 billion—nearly 55 per cent. more in real terms than in 1979. Revenue allocations to South Glamorgan health authority rose from £57·841 million to £186·075 million in the same period.

In 1990-91, South Glamorgan health authority received an increase of £12·7 million over the previous year and its capital allocation was £7·938 million—an increase of 122 per cent. over the 1989-90 figure. That increase reflects the implementation of the second capital formula update which was forecast in the previous year's planning assumptions. It is important to give the all-Wales figures, because too often the impression is given that expenditure on our national health service has been cut when, in fact, in that period it increased by leaps and bounds.

On the specific issue of bone marrow transplantion, it may be helpful if I begin by setting out the types of treatment and the ways in which leukaemia is tackled in Wales. It can be treated by a number of methods, including chemotherapy, radiotherapy and bone marrow transplantation. District health authorities are responsible for the provision of services to lekaemia patients, but radiotherapy and bone marrow transplanattions are designated as regional services. District health authorities provide facilities at many of our hospitals and these provide ease of accessibility to patients and reduce the need for very sick patients to travel long distances for regular treatment. Such facilities are based within the hospital haematology departments, and in recent years departments have been

improved as health authorities have responded to the needs of patients suffering leukaemia and other blood-related disorders.

Bone marrow transplants are becoming increasingly important in the treatment of leukaemia. We in Wales are fortunate in having a purpose-built bone marrow transplant unit at the University hospital of Wales capable of providing that complex specialist treatment. That unit was inspired by and evolved from the pioneering work of clinicians at the University of Wales college of medicine and the University hospital of Wales in the early 1980s. I am delighted to have this opportunity to pay tribute to all those who were involved in that pioneering work, especially Dr. Jack Whittaker and his colleagues in the bone marrow transplant unit.

In recognition of the need for a bone marrow transplant unit to be effective clinically and to make the best use of scarce medical expertise in this specialism, it was decided to designate the unit as a regional service. As such, it is funded by the Welsh Office to provide a service to health authorities in south Wales.

Regional designation was made in 1984 and central funds have been made available to South Glamorgan health authority to meet the capital and running costs of the purpose-built bone marrow transplant unit. It is funded to undertake 20 allogeneic transplants a year using bone marrow from suitable donors. Autologous transplants, which use the patients' own bone marrow, are also undertaken in the unit and are funded by the district health authority. In 1989-90, 21 allogeneic and 22 autologous transplants were carried out in the unit. As at 30 November 1990, seven allogeneic and 15 autologous transplants have been undertaken in the present financial year.

I am happy to give the figures for the first year: in 1988-89, there were 13 allogeneic and 18 autologous transplants. We have made progress in just two years. The health authority estimates that the cost of an allogeneic transplant is £60,005 and that of an autologous transplant is £54,210. We believe that that is money well spent on providing an opportunity for a patient to regain his or her good health. Reflecting the need to concentrate scarce clinical expertise, health authorities in north Wales secure bone marrow transplantation from neighbouring English regions.

The hon. Member for Gower raised several specific and important issues. If I cannot respond to all of them in detail today, I shall make sure that he receives a full explanation and letter from the Department as soon as possible after Christmas on those issues on which I am not able to pronounce.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the promise by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to respond to his questions at the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs on 24 October when he asked my right hon. Friend to visit the unit. I am pleased to inform the House that arrangements are in hand for that visit and, subject to confirmation with the hospital and the district health authority, my right hon. Friend hopes to visit the unit on 12 February. I, too, intend to visit the hospital and unit in the near future as part of my programme of visits to NHS facilities throughout Wales.

The hon. Gentleman referred to infection control and cross-infection. Advice is available to the hospital consultants and management from the control of infections officer to ensure a safe environment for the care of patients, particularly those with blood-related diseases such as leukaemia, who may be at special risk. I assure the hon. Gentleman that that advice is available at all times to any clinician who needs it. I hope that, if there is a problem at the University hospital, Dr. Whittaker and his colleagues will take it up with that official.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the use of a drug called alpha interferon. In addition to meeting the cost of undertaking bone marrow transplants at the University hospital, we have made central funds available to South Glamorgan health authority to meet the associated costs falling on support services such as the blood transfusion service and radiotherapy services which play a significant part in the bone marrow transplant treatment process. We recognise them as an important factor which we must consider. The cost of drugs used in the treatment regime is centrally funded.

I understand that the head of the bone marrow transplant unit, Dr. Whittaker, wishes to use a new drug, alpha interferon, as opposed to the more usual cyclosporin, which is used at the hospital. I also understand that the authority's drugs and therapeutics committee, which is composed of medical experts, has concluded that, at present, no convincing evidence exists for the use of this comparatively new drug and that its use is not justifiable on cost grounds. It is not, therefore, included in the hospital formulary and the unit general manager will not, therefore, sanction its purchase. I understand that Dr. Whittaker disagrees with that view. The chief administrative medical officer is now pursuing the matter with the parties involved. The Department's health professional group advises that the more usual drug for leukaemia patients is cyclosporin, and it is understood that this is available.

I must emphasise, however, that the specific drugs that may be prescribed are a matter for the managing health authority and the hospital management themselves on the advice of the drugs and therapeutics committee and it would be inappropriate for those of us without the essential training, technical knowledge and expertise to intervene in the question of the relative efficacy of drug regimes. I include politicians in that category. It would not be right for us, as lay people, to become involved in saying which drug is more effective. This matter must be decided by the clinicians. There is clearly a difference of professional view on this and it would not be right for the Government or Ministers to become involved in saying what should be done.

However, I emphasise that, as I understand it, central funding of drug costs has not been a factor militating against the availability of transplants where that treatment is regarded as the appropriate one for a patient. The same applies to the points made by the hon. Member for Gower about discharges from hospitals. Again, that is not a matter on which Ministers can make rulings; it must be for the clinicians in the hospital to make their own decisions, based on the health of the patient at the time, about whether that patient should, at an appropriate point, be discharged from the hospital.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to alpha interferon in connection with general practitioners. Professional advisers understand that, in the absence of convincing evidence about the wider use of alpha interferon, clinicians are voluntarily restricting the prescription of the drug to the treatment of hairy cell leukaemia. That is happening in

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authorities other than South Glamorgan which are utilising other available therapies that they consider appropriate. That, of course, includes cyclosporin.

It is important that we should look at the allegations that have been made by the hon. Gentleman and I shall therefore ask for a further review aned report on the points that he has made. I have asked officials to look at this as a matter of urgency. In the letter that I shall send to the hon. Gentleman in the new year, I shall include any further information that we receive on this matter. I assure him that no life-prolonging drugs have been withheld from patients. It is simply a matter of which drug is most appropriate for the patient. It is right that the health service should take account of costs. If a drug is an effective means of dealing with a complaint and is a lot cheaper than another drug, it would be ethically wrong to spend money on the more expensive drug. It is therefore right to ask the clinicians to make the judgment on that matter. However, we shall have another look at this and I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the drug erythropoeitin, which is known as EPO for short. Funds have been made available to the health authorities managing the main renal units in Wales. They include South Glamorgan, West Glamorgan and Clwyd. The drug is used to counter the effects of anaemia. I understand that it costs about £6,000 per patient per year. We are making funds available to assist with the costs of providing EPO. This year, recurring funds of £240,000, which were first provided in 1989-90, have been continued and an additional £150,000 of funding has been brought forward. The total for the two sets of figures for 1990-91 is now £390,000. The hon. Gentleman, who is a fair man, will recognise that we are providing considerable funds for that drug.

Health officials are not aware of any instructions issued in Wales that would restrict the present arrangements whereby a general practitioner who accepts clinical responsibility for a condition requiring the use of the drug may use it. If the hon. Gentleman has any information to the contrary, I should be happy to receive it and will take the matter up. My understanding at the moment is that there is no restriction on general practitioners using EPO.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to anaesthetists and radiologists. I understand from the unit general manager at University hospital Wales that the complement of anaesthetists at the hospital is at present two short, but that arrangements are in hand to recruit replacements. The job descriptions have been approved and advertisements will be placed shortly. Details of the amount of time spent by anaesthetists and radiologists working for the bone marrow transplant unit are not available. It is for the hospital unit to plan the use of its personnel. However, I understand that no operations have been cancelled in the BMT unit as a result of the temporary shortage of two anaesthetists. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's remarks on this point to the attention of the unit general manager.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the district health authority's funding of the bone marrow transplant unit. No representations have been made by the South Glamorgan health authority that it is in difficulty in managing the regional service for allogeneic bone marrow transplants.

However, in the context of the new arrangements that are to apply to regional services following their redesignation as district services with effect from 1 April 1991, the authority has indicated that, with the increased activity, the total running costs of the unit now exceed the funding provided by the Department. The latter relates to the level of service originally agreed—the 20 allogeneic transplants—and, as has already been said, the authority has not made any requests for additional funding in the intervening period. I shall, of course, ensure that the discussions that are taking place between South Glamorgan health authority and officials in my Department bear in mind the points that the hon. Gentleman has made when they consider the new arrangements that will be in place after 1 April 1991.

The hon. Gentleman also commented on what he said was the inadequate number of nurses available to the BMT unit. Again, we shall look at that matter and I will write to the hon. Gentleman about it. However, he will appreciate that it is not the job of the Department to monitor and control staffing at particular wards and units. Nevertheless, as the hon. Gentleman has raised this matter, we shall ensure that he gets an answer on it.

Looking to the future, the management and financial framework of the national health service is in the course of change to reflect the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. To ensure that the national health service is made increasingly responsive to the needs of patients, new arrangements are being brought in from 1 April 1991. Those new arrangements will be introduced in Wales from next year for the specialist services which, at present, are designed and provided as regional services. That includes the bone marrow transplant unit at University hospital.

The arrangements are being introduced in discussion with the relevant health authorities, following a comprehensive review of individual regional services and consultation with the health service in Wales. Individual health authorities will negotiate contracts with the providing units on services for patients, including any associated drug costs. However, because of their costs, the variable need for them or their heavy dependence on the availability of donors, a number of services are continuing to receive central protection, subject to periodic review.

It is a measure of our concern for leukaemia patients that the bone marrow transplant service at UHW is among those services that will benefit from that arrangement. That will mean that the level of service which has, in the past, been centrally funded and available to patients throughout south Wales will continue to be available to health authorities to meet the needs of leukaemia patients. Detailed arrangements are being considered in discussion with the managing health authority.

I reiterate that, in the haematology departments of hospitals throughout Wales, we have good caring facilities for the treatment of leukaemia patients. That is no less so in South Glamorgan where, in addition to the district service, the University hospital of Wales provides a highly specialised bone marrow transplant service to patients from its own and other districts. That service is funded centrally to provide an agreed level of treatment and, with the support of South Glamorgan health authority, has succeeded beyond expectation in extending the service available to leukaemia sufferers.

As the new Minister responsible for health in Wales, I want to take this opportunity to make clear for all to see

my commitment to the continuing work carried out over the past eleven and a half years to improve our health service. I use the national health service and I know how good it is. I believe that we can do even better. The policies that we have introduced to enhance health care by making it more responsive to the needs of patients and offering them greater choice will lead us forward to even greater excellence and quality and to a health service that will take Wales into the next century with a level of health care on course to rival the best in Europe.

I thank the hon. Member for Gower for introducing this subject which is of great concern to all of us in Wales and for giving me the opportunity, in my first debate, to reply on such an important subject.

Security (Ulster)

10.10 am

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am glad that this opportunity has been given to me to discuss a matter of the gravest urgency, the present security situation in Northern Ireland with special reference to the IRA's campaign of intimidation in County Fermanagh and County Tyrone. The Government have many pressing matters on their agenda but the first of those should be the defence and protection of the citizens of the United Kingdom. There is grave urgency concerning this matter in the United Kingdom's Province of Northern Ireland. I cannot stress the urgency enough.

I shall put the backcloth fairly before the House and the Minister. I am not suggesting that the Minister is in a state of ignorance, because he comes from Northern Ireland. I know that he has been "Englified" to a great extent, but I hope that what he gained by birth, upbringing and education in Northern Ireland still has a controlling and governing residue in his life and heart. I feel that for the record we must put the dark backcloth into perspective.

In the past 21 years, some 2,800 people have been killed in Northern Ireland and 30,000 have been maimed. If those figures were put into a United Kingdom context, 100,000 people would have been killed and 1 million maimed. Perhaps those figures go deeper to the hearts of hon. Members. That being so, we have a most grave problem.

The Minister will remember a passage in scripture in which a certain king of Israel asked, "Who killed all these?" It would be appropriate for me to tell the House of the problem, but I shall not use my own words because people may say that I put a gloss upon it. I shall use the words of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party in Northern Ireland. When addressing his conference on 26 November 1988, he said:

> "Let the record speak. Up till last Saturday 2,705 people have died in the twenty-year period of the current troubles. 31 per cent. of these were members of the security forces. 14 per cent. were members of paramilitary organisations. 55 per cent. were ordinary civilian men and women from both sections of the community, 69 per cent. of whom were from the Catholic community and 31 per cent. from the Protestant community. And who killed all those people? The statistics are devastating. 44 per cent. were killed by the Provisional IRA and 18 per cent. by their fellow travelling 'republican' paramilitaries."

That shows that the majority of killings were carried out by republican terrorist organisations. The hon. Member for Foyle went on:

> "27 per cent. were killed by Loyalists. 10 per cent. were killed by the British Army. 2 per cent."—

and that is an interesting figure. From the Opposition Benches, not including my Unionist colleagues, there is a cry that there is a shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland. Yet only 2 per cent. were killed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. There is a tremendous agitation from Dublin and republicans in the House that the Ulster Defence Regiment should be stood down. Yet an even more amazing figure shows that only 0·28 per cent. were killed by the UDR.

The hon. Member for Foyle said:

> "In short, people describing themselves as Irish republicans have killed 6 times as many human beings as the British Army, 30 times as many as the RUC and 250 times as many as the UDR. And wait! One of their main claims is that

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they are the defenders of the Catholic community. Of the 1,194 members of the Catholic community who died, 46 per cent. were killed by Loyalist paramilitaries, 37 per cent. by people describing themselves as republicans and 17 per cent. by the security forces. And in the last 10 years since 1 January 1978 of the 305 members of the Catholic community who have lost their lives, 112 (37 per cent.) have been killed by people describing themselves as republicans, 105 (34 per cent.) by Loyalists and 88 (29 per cent.) by the security forces.

In the last 20 years republicans have killed more than twice as many Catholics as the security forces and in the last 10 years have killed more than the Loyalists."

Those facts need to be emphasised so that the matter may be put into perspective.

I could go on to defend the security forces, but I want to say that, in my public career, my party and myself have stood solidly in defence of the security forces—the Royal Ulster Constabulary, its reserves, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the members of the other regiments of the British Army. Although I believe that it is my duty as a public representative to seek a change in security policy and to bring to the House's attention any weaknesses in the policy, in no way have I ever tried to attack members of the security forces on the ground who are doing a very difficult job. Our thoughts are with the troops in the Gulf, but the thoughts of the Ulster people are also with their security forces at this time.

This Christmas, men will leave their families and children and put themselves on the line. When the little curly-headed lassie puts her arms around her daddy to say goodbye, she does not know whether he will return. Those men should get the plaudits of this House. We should honour them as they deserve. I pay tribute to their courage, resolve and unflinching integrity. One or two matters may have annoyed people and, naturally, we have brought them to the House's attention, but the integrity of those men is almost 100 per cent. Today the House should put on record the fact that we honour those men. They deserve our prayers and support.

The death of Constable Lewis Robinson at the Killeen barrier post has caused me great personal concern. This year we have had to pass through a grim ordeal. Seventy-four people have been killed in Northern Ireland compared with the total of 62 for the previous year. This year the IRA has been more active in Great Britain and on the continent than ever before. The late Ian Gow, who represented Eastbourne, fell massacred by IRA terrorists, leaving his seat vacant, and we must also consider that.

Nineteen ninety has seen the emergence of human bomb attacks. It is appalling that the IRA strap the driver in. Their most recent atrocity was to disable a man's legs so that he could not escape if there was that possibility. That is the depths of depravity reaching rock bottom. The treatment of his father and mother was almost like Saddam Hussein's tortures in Kuwait. We must set our face against that and take steps to ensure that it is not allowed to recur.

There has been an upsurge in attacks on the Protestant community in the rest of the Province with Mr. Gilmore in Kilrea and Mr. Shields outside Maghera. I treat with disdain and scorn those so-called mistaken shootings. People should not have a gun. Moreover, every killing is a mistake. Indeed, it is more than a mistake: it is evil and must be rooted out of society.

What comfort can a mother have when she looks at the corpse of her son and hears ringing in her ears the IRA's apology that it murdered the wrong person? When it comes from so-called Protestant paramilitaries, it is even more nauseating because the basis of Protestantism is civil and religious liberty for all men. We should condemn anyone who says, "We are out to murder, but we are sorry that we have murdered the wrong person." The Government must take as many steps as possible to wipe that out of our community.

The RUC's chief constable has warned us of a threat of increased IRA activity and the Government have taken it on board. We have an extra 550 troops in the Province. Last night the city of Belfast was brought to a complete standstill by a series of hoax bombs and real bombs which were defused. It took me one hour 20 minutes via Hillsborough to reach the airport. I had to fly here yesterday because I dared not leave it until this morning. Anything could have happened and there would have been no possibility of my fulfilling my duties in this House.

The Government need to look hard at that. It is paralysing our economic life. It is putting the mailed fist of Republican terrorism on the artery of our economy and seeking to despoil it. What sort of men who would rule the whole of Ireland seek to blow up the shops in the centre of Belfast which serve the community? I fear that, before Christmas, there may be even greater atrocities in our land, especially in Belfast.

The security forces have confirmed that the IRA has undoubtedly large amounts of Semtex and weapons. Some have been recovered and we welcome that. Every gun that is recovered may be a life saved. Every pound of Semtex that is recovered is probably a life saved or, at least, a life free from maiming. Searches should be redoubled. Although Republican areas protest against the inconvenience of such searches, it is better to inconvenience the public than to follow coffins to the grave and allow the IRA to have its way.

I will not go into the Killeen incident in depth. If anybody has an interest in the life of a police officer, I in my capacity as a minister of the gospel had an interest in preserving the life of Constable Lewis Robinson. His father-in-law is an elder in the church that I serve. I have not only a political but a pastoral and personal interest. He was abducted and murdered. What alarmed us was that when that was reported to the officers at the barrier there were insufficient back-up forces to go down that road and deal with the IRA who were about to murder the officer. That is at the heart of the matter, and I will not weary the House with all the details. The prison officer who informed me of that came with me to see the Secretary of State whom he told exactly what took place.

I am aware of certain criticisms of what happened. They are criticisms not of individual police officers or of members of the Army, but to the effect that there were not back-up forces to deal with the matter. The Chief Constable has every right to defend his men and to condemn the monsters who commit such murders. However, no responsible chief constable has the right to attack a public representative for simply pointing out to the community that something is seriously wrong with a security policy that does not have the back-up on the ground to deal with a crime such as that which was about to be committed against Constable Robinson.

The Northern Ireland press does not treat me very favourably, or at times very fairly, but if one is in the kitchen one should take the heat and not complain. So when I quote from the *Belfast Newsletter*, I am not quoting

from a publication that is a Paisley fan, if I might use that expression. Similarly, when I quote from the *Belfast Telegraph*, I am also not quoting a newspaper that is a Paisley fan. In the early days, both newspapers did everything possible to keep me from being elected to the House and to Stormont. On the day that I fought the Stormont election, one of them printed the name of my opponent on its front page with an X marked against it, and warned its readers that they should have nothing to do in that election of my wife's husband.

So, when those newspapers take off against the Chief Constable, it is because they are convinced that something must be put right. The Chief Constable viciously attacked the media, and political leaders whom he did not name, for bringing into the public domain the growing sense of hopelessness and helplessness. The *Belfast Newsletter* printed in its opinion column the headline, "RUC Chief off target." It commented:

"Whatever else may be said about the response of the security forces it is a demonstrable fact that it has been inadequate. It serves no purpose for the media or anyone else to blame individual officers.

But equally it serves no purpose for any one in authority to imply or suggest that, out of a sense of loyalty, the security forces should be above and beyond criticism either for what they do or fail to do. That is the road to further bloodshed and infinite despair."

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The hon. Gentleman is right to bring to the attention of the House the failure of our own security services. However, did not the abduction in question take place on the Republic side of the frontier? Tremendous claims are made about the great co-operation between the two security services, but how can such atrocities continue to be committed on the main road from Belfast to Dublin without anyone being detained or apprehended? Is that not an example of the failure of that so-called co-operation?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes. I am disturbed that Ministers should have made statements to the House over a period of years about increasing co-operation. In fact, the Government have been very lavish with their praise. I do not know whether the Christmas spirit motivates Ministers every time they stand at the Dispatch Box, but their assurances appal the people of Northern Ireland.

I hope that the tragic incident involving Lewis Robinson will never be repeated, and that the Minister will give a strong assurance, which he will translate into action, that in future there will be a force adequate enough to take out those who would commit such a dastardly murder. To add to the remarks of the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth), the leader of the RUC federation had some strong comments to make in his annual address to the Northern Ireland Police Federation:

"Mr. Beattie went on to describe the south as 'an open house to murderers, bombers and gunmen', and the Irish Government as 'lacking in political guts', and accused them of hiding behind an 'unpredictable' judicial system and the provisions of the 1987 Extradition Act which he described as 'ineffective'.

He said that rulings in cases like that of Father Ryan were 'a calculated insult to the British judiciary and a blatant political pandering which betrayed an unwillingness to grasp the nettle of terrorism.'

Mr. Beattie also called on Mr. Haughey to intern terrorists if he wanted to deny them safe haven. He said such action would serve more purpose and be a lot more constructive than endless attacks on the UDR and the professionalism of the RUC."

I turn to the situation in Enniskillen and in South Fermanagh, which the Minister will know I have raised before in the House. I have in my hand a copy of *The Impartial Reporter*, which contains in its columns of public notices certain advertisements; and I will read one or two of them. One states:

"Owing to a phone call we can no longer serve the security forces. Traynor's Cafe, Maguiresbridge."

That is a Roman Catholic establishment. Another advertisement was placed by W. J. Kennedy in Magheraveely, which is a Protestant establishment:

"We wish to make it publicly known that we will no longer serve the security forces."

A third advertisement reads:

"At the request of the Fermanagh Brigade of the Provisional IRA, I, Barry McCormack, Proprietor of Silver Dollar Take Aways in Lisnaskea and Irvinestown, will not be serving members of the Security Forces."

The Minister has personal knowledge of Northern Ireland and a good grasp of Irish history, so he will know that the boycott weapon has been used in the past to intimidate people. It seems that there is to be a dreadful revival of that technique. It is all very well for right hon. and hon. Members to sit in this Chamber, in the relative safety of this part of the United Kingdom, and to criticise people for reacting in that way, by placing such advertisements—but what are they to do? I have twin boys, and I know how my wife and I would feel if, living in such an isolated community, we received a phone call telling us, "If you want to see both your sons in a coffin, carry on serving the police and the Army in your premises. But if you want to keep your sons alive, put an advert in the local paper to say that you will not serve the security forces."

The people who criticise and condemn those who place such advertisements have never been in their position. If people who are threatened go to the police, they are told that the police can do nothing to guarantee that their sons will not be murdered. The owners of such businesses are forced to place advertisements of that kind if they are to protect their families. Some right hon. and hon. Members might say that they should stand up and be counted, but although I in no way advocate giving in to the IRA, I must tell them and others that they should first imagine themselves in a similar situation. Only then could they appreciate what we and those shop owners are up against.

It is important for us to realise that what has happened on the border—the closing down of Army checkpoints overnight—has left Protestant families in a Government-created no-man's land. These people are simply terrified. I have talked to them, and they know not what to do. They are officially shut out from their own country for the period of darkness—the very time when the terrorists strike.

I trust that the Under-Secretary can give us some assurance today that the Government have taken this matter on board. I know that he is not able to tell us—nor do we want to know—the strategy that the security forces are adopting: that would pre-empt the effectiveness of such a strategy. However, I want a categorical assurance from the hon. Gentleman today.

The rubbish spoken by ecumenical prelates, including the new RC Archbishop of Armagh, will not bring a settlement from IRA terrorists. I find it grievously insulting to Protestant politicians when, on the numerous occasions that we pleaded with the clerical gentleman to talk to us—we said, "Please come and talk to us"—he said,

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"No, I will not talk to you." Yet before the world he insidiously trounced Protestant politicians and said that politicians should be talking.

I will talk to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh any day that he wants to come to me, as the representative of the whole of Northern Ireland in Europe. I shall be prepared to meet him—he is a constituent of mine—and I am prepared to listen to what he has to say and to tell him what I feel.

I know that the Minister was listening to the prelate recently, as was the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis). I do not know whether they benefited from the worship of the Virgin Mary in that programme. I would certainly not benefit from it. However, in politics we need to ensure that we do not act hypocritically.

10.42 am

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) for allowing me a little time to participate briefly in the debate. I am glad that the Minister has been joined by his ministerial colleague on the Front Bench—although it is not for the first time, especially in a debate on Northern Ireland—because I know that they both recognise the vital importance of security, which has been raised in the debate on the initiative of the hon. Member for Antrim, North.

We could borrow a phrase from another organisation and say that the most important thing is the "right to life". The hon. Member for Antrim, North mentioned the Ulster Defence Regiment. I have been astonished how the morale of that regiment has been maintained, and how the steadiness and fairness of its behavour have been so evident in the face of all the vile criticism levelled at it, especially in recent months.

There was a co-ordinated assault which resulted in the ill-fated Stevens inquiry. It was ill-fated because it proved precisely nothing. The Stevens inquiry was unfairly accused, by those who played a major part in bringing it about, of a whitewash job, but that was not the case. The reality was that there was nothing to discover, so it was hardly surprising that it ended in a fiasco.

Not one single conviction resulted on the basis of any terrorist-related offence as a result of the humiliation of all the members of the Ulster Defence Regiment, who were arrested as if they were terrorists or invaders in the early hours of a Sunday morning in the most disgraceful manner, which placed their lives and the lives of their families in jeopardy. Many of their families had to move to safer areas.

There was one astonishing statement in the inquiry report—there were many such statements but this one struck me in particular. It was the assertion that referees of recruits for Ulster Defence Regiment members ought to be interviewed. I have acted in that capacity, together with the hon. Member for Antrim, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) who submitted themselves to interviews. Being the honourable Members of Parliament that we are, we gave truthful answers. I was absolutely astonished that no one had told Mr. Stevens that that had been standard practice.

One nationalist spokesman recently declared that the Royal Ulster Constabulary would not be acceptable for about 50 years. Surely that is prejudging the effect of all that the police are doing to enforce the law without fear or favour. That nationalist spokesman ought to give advice to terrorists because, if they stopped their vile campaign of murder, I am quite certain that every member of the RUC would be only too delighted to revert to civilian policing. That would also encourage and permit a larger number of Roman Catholic applicants to join the RUC. They cannot do so at the moment because it would put their lives in jeopardy.

My view, which is shared by members of both our Unionist parties, is that all members of all arms of the security forces require and deserve the full support of Parliament and the Government. I know that Northern Ireland Ministers would agree that those forces should not be starved of the financial resources necessary to provide equipment. However, there are others in government whose job it is to ensure that money is not spent unless it is absolutely necessary to spend it. I have in mind those Ministers who occupy the building just across the road. However, they found the money to conduct the Falklands campaign and—all honour to them—they are finding the money to conduct the preparations for a possible campaign in the Gulf.

The security forces deserve and have earned our moral support. We could all help in that regard by illustrating the fallacy that only one side of the community suffers from inconvenience, and what is sometimes called harassment, by the actions of the security forces. All of us have been stopped, invited to get out of our cars on a pouring wet night and frisked. On one occasion, I had the distinction of being placed under close arrest for 50 minutes because I had committed the unpardonable crime of having an Ordnance Survey map of my constituency on the dashboard. However, I fully accept that the Army unit had to be impartial, and had to treat us all as potential terrorists and suspects. The security forces do not enjoy their arduous and dangerous duties, and the entire community has a duty to understand the stress under which they operate.

Hon. Members can say with confidence that no security forces anywhere in the world would have conducted themselves with the fairness, determination and display of fortitude which has been so evident among all the security forces operating in Northern Ireland.

10.48 am

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I thank the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) for doing the House a service by initiating this important debate, and for the way in which he did it. He and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) hold a common view in support of the security forces and of the police. I want to begin my response, which I fear may not be as full as I would have wished, given the importance of the subject, by adding my tribute on behalf of the Government to the security forces, the police and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve. I am sure that I speak for the whole House when I thank them for the job that they do on our behalf in difficult and dangerous circumstances. We are immensely in the debt of the security forces, the UDR, the RUC and the reservists. They show enormous courage and make real sacrifices, and it is right and proper for us to recognise that.

It is my sad duty to tell the hon. Member for Antrim, North that the 74 deaths to which he referred have been augmented by the murder of an RUC full-time reserve officer, Wilfred Wethers, in the lane-way of his house in Waringstown road, Lurgan, just after midnight. He had served in the force for 15 years, was married and had four children aged between nine and 20 years. I know that the whole House will join me in offering sincere condolences to his family in this tragic circumstance, and in expressing our utter condemnation of those who murdered him.

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Member for Antrim, North had to say, and I understand the depth of feeling and breadth of experience underlying his arguments. He was, I think, right to rehearse again for the benefit of the House the harrowing statistics that he delivered, and also to point the finger: he, and all Northern Ireland Members, reject violence from whatever quarter it may come, but there is no doubt that the hon. Gentleman was right to single out the Provisional IRA as people who glory in murder more than any other organisation.

Neither the Government nor the security forces are complacent about the current level of violence. Indeed, the Secretary of State's statement about security policy made it clear that there is no such thing as an acceptable level of violence. We are determined to eradicate terrorism, whatever its source, and not merely to contain it; we are also committed to maintaining the rule of law, defending the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland and their opposition to terrorism, and creating the conditions for a just, peaceful and prosperous society.

However, we must also be realistic. The complete removal of terrorism is a difficult, complex and dangerous task. There is no quick fix, and, although many possible measures seem attractive at first sight, they may prove on analysis to be of little value, perhaps even self-defeating. That is not to say that the defeat of terrorism is an impossible task; it is not and it will be achieved. The Government are committed to ensuring that the police, supported by the armed forces, have all the resources that they need to undertake their difficult and dangerous work on behalf of the whole community. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

It is, I suppose, only natural for the media and some others to concentrate on the tragic events that occur in Northern Ireland, and perhaps even to take a downbeat and depressed view of what happens in the Province. Let me pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman, who did not fall into that trap today. There are successes. Only yesterday, for instance, the security forces recovered two AKM rifles, an Armalite, a pistol, ammunition, 5 lb of Semtex and other items of terrorist equipment. As the hon. Gentleman has rightly said, such action takes equipment out of the terrorist arsenal and saves lives. At the end of September, the security forces had recovered 167 weapons, nearly 17,000 rounds of ammunition and over 4,000 lb of explosives. So far, 288 people have been arrested and charged in connection with terrorist crimes, and 307 have been convicted.

In a sense, those finds are only the tip of the iceberg. Every day, at all hours of the day and night, in all weathers and everywhere—I repeat, everywhere—in Northern Ireland, the security forces are present. Sometimes they are visible, conducting foot or mobile patrols or vehicle checkpoints; sometimes they are not so visible. The effect of their activity is to deter the terrorist, to make him abandon deeds that would otherwise have cost lives and, sometimes, to catch him red-handed.

It is important to the security forces, and to the pursuit of a security policy in Northern Ireland, that those forces receive the backing of the law. The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill is currently in Committee. If it is the will of the House, a new power will be given to the police and the armed forces—the power to examine documents and other recorded data found in the course of a search as far as is reasonably required to ascertain whether they contain information that is likely to be useful to terrorists.

There will also be a new offence, that of possessing items intended for terrorist purposes, and a new power to allow the armed forces to seize equipment used to reopen closed border crossings. There will be another new offence, that of making bypasses around closed crossing points. All those measures are part of the fabric of tackling terrorism.

The hon. Gentleman raised the sad and deplorable death of Mr. Robinson. Continued attacks carried out on that Killeen stretch of the A1 are in the interests of no one but the terrorist. Attacks or abandoned bombs on the road not only cause inconvenience and affect the financial returns of traders in the area, but are designed to kill. I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman when he deplored all the Provisional IRA's talk about mistakes. These are not mistakes; those people set out to murder, and they did so. If they got the target wrong—in their terms—that does not make it a mistake: it is still murder, and everyone should understand that.

It will not surprise hon. Members to learn—I thinks that this is the assurance that the hon. Gentleman was seeking—that we are looking closely at how better to protect that stretch of road, and are discussing with the Irish Government possible practical measures to improve its security and that of other border roads. I know that hon. Members will understand if I do not disclose the details of those discussions, for obvious reasons. Our aim is clear, however: we want to ensure that murders such as those of Constable Robinson, Judge and Lady Gibson and the Hanna family, and the recent attack on the Cloghoge permanent vehicle checkpoint are not repeated.

The hon. Gentleman talked with feeling about what was happening in Fermanagh, and again I share his feelings. Those who have not been put in such a position should think carefully before delivering serious criticism of the actions of those who have. The Government readily acknowledge and appreciate the valuable contribution of those who serve in the security forces in that particularly difficult part of the Province. They provide a service to the community—as, indeed, do others who help them in their work.

I utterly condemn the Provisional IRA's campaign of intimidation and threats aimed at the people of Fermanagh. The security forces in that area are already stepping up their operational profile to protect and reassure those who are at risk, and to deter further terrorist activity. A comprehensive range of measures is already in place to protect and support those who are at particular risk. For obvious reasons again, I will not give hon. Members the details of the arrangements, but I assure them that all possible steps will be taken.

As we approach Christmas, it is important for us all to understand that we have a role to play in supporting the security forces in Northern Ireland. There are people who

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know who is causing intimidation in Fermanagh. There are people with information that coulld be of assistance. Apathy is not an acceptable discharge of civic responsibility when the lives of people are at risk. I appeal to all the people of the Province to show their support for the security forces and the police, not least by making available any information that would bring those perpetrators of violence to justice, for that ultimately is the best way to secure peace, tranquillity and prosperity in the Province.

I take this opportunity to wish right hon. and hon. Members who represent Northern Ireland constituencies and who have a complexity to their lives and a pressure that the rest of us do not experience a very happy Christmas. I am sure that they will agree with me when I say that it is perhaps even more important also to wish all their constituents a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Football

11 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I welcome the opportunity to introduce this debate, for two good reasons. First, it provides me with the opportunity to raise matters that affect our great national game of soccer at a critical time in its history. Secondly, it gives the new Minister for Sport the first opportunity since his appointment to speak from the Dispatch Box on a sporting matter and therefore to break his duck, if that is not mixing my sporting metaphors too much. I genuinely welcome him, as I am sure the sporting fraternity does, to his new post. I look forward to having a dialogue with him on a number of sporting matters between now and the general election.

I pay tribute to the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) who had the unfortunate task of defending the indefensible—I refer to identity cards for football supporters—for much of his reign. I shall remember him not for that alone, but for much other important work that he did, away from the limelight, for disabled athletes and for his efforts to combat the evils of drug taking in sport. I am pleased to see from this morning's press that the new Minister for Sport is carrying on that good work. All sports lovers will wish him well in his new role.

Although I hold the post of chairman of the all-party football committee, I intend to speak in a personal capacity and to be constructively critical of the Government when dealing with matters that cause both me and the football world concern. I absolve the Minister from that criticism, certainly up to the time of his reply this morning. I do not blame him for any past failures. He is still enjoying his honeymoon period.

A casual observer of the football scene might have gained the impression that everything is progressing steadily towards conversion to all-seater football stadiums. However, the game faces a potential crisis, due to escalating police charges, delays in establishing the Football Licensing Authority and confusion over planning policies. Much more fundamentally, however, there is no cohesive and central strategy for the game. If football is to take the necessary steps outlined in Lord Justice Taylor's report into the Hillsborough disaster and harness the undoubted talents and willingness of many of those who are in the game, a Lord Justice Taylor with political clout will be needed to bring them to fruition.

The great strength of Lord Justice Taylor was that he was able to take a step backwards from any single area of football and exercise a dispassionate overview before he formulated his findings. If football is to derive full benefit from the report, it must draw on those same strengths when it comes to implementing and developing the report's findings. When we debated Lord Justice Taylor's report I told the House that it should be seen as a catalyst for change, not as tablets of stone.

A lot of nonsense is often talked, not least by some Ministers, when the finances of the game are discussed. If we were to heed the wishes of some, football stadiums would be overflowing with milk and honey. They would have money aplenty. The majority of clubs, however, survive on a financial knife edge. They are supported through fund-raising efforts and by the goodwill of fanatics, in the best sense of that word, in the director's

box and on the terraces. A recent study by Jordan and Sons shows that only six out of the 20 clubs in the first division made a pre-tax profit in the 1989-90 season.

Another fallacy that must be firmly dispelled is that, somehow, football is a financial drain on the taxpayer. Nothing could be further from the truth. We all welcome the reduction in the football pool betting duty from 42·5 to 40 per cent. in the last Budget. However, that merely reversed the decision that was made by the Government to increase the rate from 40 to 42·5 per cent. Moreover, the £100 million over five years that will be released by that move is but a tiny fraction of the £2·4 billion that the Treasury has taken out of the game in betting duty during the last 10 years.

Furthermore, the £2·4 billion does not include the income that accrues to the Chancellor of the Exchequer from PAYE and VAT and other income derived from the thousands of jobs created by the footbal industry. Put simply, football is a nice little earner for the Government. If sceptics were to take the trouble to find out what positive moves football has made since the Taylor report was published, they would find that, in any comparison made between Government efforts and those of the football authorities, without doubt the latter comes off best.

Football has set up four working parties to get to grips with the Taylor recommendations. Great strides have been taken towards finding alternative sources of funding to bring about stadium improvements. They include a levy on transfer fees, broadcasting fees and even sponsorship for the FA cup. Football is making the running. The Government are lagging behind in their response to the challenges that we face if the game is to be taken in a good state into the next century. Ironically, the Government suffer to some extent from a problem that plagues football. Their interest in the game is spread over many areas and Departments. Certain aspects of football are covered by the Department of the Environment, the Home Office and the Foreign Office. The Minister's responsibilities for sport have now moved to the Department of Education and Science. I shall reserve my judgment on whether that is a good move.

The new Prime Minister has rightly been welcomed by the sporting authorities because of his genuine links with sport. I hope that he will listen, however indirectly, to the debate and consider the strengths of my arguments, including the one that I advanced at a recent conference of the Central Council of Physical Recreation. I said then that if the Prime Minister really cares about sport, he ought to enhance the Minister's position by making him a Minister of State. That would give him more clout to argue the case not just for football but for sport in general. That would ensure that the shortcomings of the Government's policies towards football in previous years are not repeated.

It might also avoid one of the Government's most significant failures, which is their laggardly approach to one of Lord Justice Taylor's most important recommendations—the Football Licensing Authority, which is to be charged with implementing and overseeing ground safety and conditions and the move towards all-seater accommodation by 1994 in all first division and second division grounds and in all league grounds by 1999.

It is now 17 months since the former Minister for Sport claimed that the Government would respond swiftly to anything Lord Justice Taylor had to say on safety and would activate whatever measures were necessary to ensure that grounds are safe.

Three months previously, on 20 April, even the former Prime Minister, whose attitude to the game was, to say the least, antipathetic, admitted that to delay a legislative measure that would enable us to take advantage of Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations for another 12 months would be negligent. As, 20 months later, the FLA is not up and running, negligence would be a charitable description of the Government's record.

It is not as though the Government are unaware of the serious problems caused by the delays. The hon. Member for Lewisham, East admitted to the House in the debate on the Taylor report:

> "If we did not have the legislative vehicle in place, we would not be in a position to give clubs as much time as possible to meet the timetable outlined in the report."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1990; Vol. 166, c. 257.]

Since that date, as the hon. Member for Lewisham, East and his successor are aware, I have raised this matter many times, only to experience each time more delays and setbacks.

The Government missed their own deadline—1 June—for setting up the FLA and took a month to admit that such a deadline existed, despite the pleas from worried clubs which, in the absence of that body, were unable to determine what constituted a seat, let alone any major structural or design proposals.

The date by which the FLA will be up and running has constantly receded into the distant future, which has grave consequences for clubs. At the start of the current season, the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), as secretary of the all-party football committee, and I wrote to all league clubs asking how much progress they had made in converting to all-seater accommodation. Sixty-six per cent. of respondents have been unable to carry out any work and 86 per cent. were not planning to carry out any work this season. Given the delays in establishing the FLA, 45 per cent. were unhappy with the timetable laid down for conversion. More than one third said that their work had been directly affected by the delay. One club summed it up very well:

> "The delay has reduced the impetus and importance of Taylor's recommendations."

We would all concur with that. The Government must take responsibility for this regrettable state of affairs, which unfortunately shows no sign of abating.

Only nine days ago, the Minister of State, Home Office, admitted to me that it would be unrealistic to expect the FLA to administer a licensing system effectively before it has acquired the necessary staff and expertise. I understand the problem of the Minister for Sport because it is not his responsibility, but that underlines my point that we should have a Minister with all-embracing powers.

Where do we stand 17 months after the Government's statement that they would respond swiftly to the Taylor report? To put it bluntly, the FLA, which wishes to get on with the job, has only one third of the administrative staff required for its operations and recruitment of inspectors is only just under way. It is estimated that that will not be completed until next spring. Even if all that were in place, the FLA still does not possess the legislative powers required to fulfil its role, because the Government have failed to implement sections 9 and 13 of the Football Spectators Act 1989. We heard in Committee time and again of the importance of those sections, which give the

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FLA powers to lay down any terms and conditions for inclusion in the local authority safety certificates issued to clubs which it believes are necessary to the maintenance of safety.

Furthermore, the FLA is still waiting for powers to enter to inspect grounds, to examine club safety certificates and to obtain from local authorities information on the issuing of such certificates. It is not good enough for the Government to claim, as they did in October last year, that the FLA should ensure that the safety of individuals is at the top of its list; they are not giving it the tools to do the job. The FLA chairman, Norman Jacobs, is unhappy with such a state of affairs, as are football authorities, local authorities, the police and clubs.

It must be asked: who has benefited from the delay? It certainly is not football. The Government have saved £400,000, because 59 per cent. of the proposed FLA budget for the current financial year has not been spent. They should act swiftly and immediately to enable the implementation of sections 9 and 13 and that £400,000 should be ploughed back into the FLA to give it the assistance that it needs. Anything less would run counter to the spirit of the Taylor recommendations, which the Government wholeheartedly endorsed. The Football League estimates that the cost of implementing the recommendations in full, rather than simply putting shoddy seats into shoddy stands, would be as high as £665 million.

Given that, it is clear that there will be severe financial pressure on clubs as they seek to convert to all-seater accommodation, yet on top of that pressure the game is facing a crisis of potentially devastating proportions as a result of the staggering increases in police charges. Their charges have risen by four times the rate of inflation and there has been a concurrent rise in police wage costs in recent years. At the same time, the arrest rate at football grounds has dramatically decreased.

The Government are threatening to make matters infinitely worse by introducing a system of charging clubs for the full cost of policing, which includes costs of covering overtime and the leave and rest days of officers on duty. Such an approach is not proposed for similar events such as pop concerts and party conferences. If it were, the Conservative party would have to pay £2 million for policing its last conference. I do not think for one moment that the Government will be asking Tory central office to cough up that money.

It has been argued that Lord Justice Taylor supported such a system of charging. That is not true. He said that there should be a consistent and businesslike approach to charging and realistic costs. Nobody in their right mind could argue that the costs are realistic.

Overshadowing all that is the issue of planning policy guidance. The stark reality is that, if clubs try to relocate their stadiums, they are in danger of being thwarted by inflexible planning straitjackets contained in the Government's current draft guidance. The Minister has been keen to portray this document as "positive and flexible", yet in two separate parts of the guidance it is stated that football stadiums should not be regarded as appropriate development on green belt land.

The Minister nods, but the results of the survey published recently by the Royal Town Planning Institute show that such an approach could render the identification of new sites almost impossible. That must cause the Minister concern. We all accept that the green belt must not be breached, except in the most exceptional circumstances, but encouraging the development of genuine community-based, multi-purpose sports stadiums, with football clubs as the hub of activity and under an obligation to involve and serve the local community, would do much to enhance the breadth and quality of leisure provision. However, the Minister seems to adopt an unyielding approach to development.

Football has shown itself willing to undertake such activities through its highly successful and rapidly expanding football in the community scheme. Such an approach might finally attract families to games. We heard from the previous Prime Minister and others about bringing families back to the game. Families have never been involved in the game in numbers, so what we should be talking about is attracting them for the first time to our great game. That is the challenge facing Government in the years ahead.

Such developments would lead to greater support for sport in schools. I know that by arguing this case I am knocking at an already half-open door because the Minister has, as I have, a young son who is a keen sports buff. I suppose that that is a built-in pressure on the Minister to do something about protecting physical education and sport provision in the national curriculum for 14 to 16-year-olds.

I have argued that what is needed is a Lord Justice Taylor free from judicial constraint, a Leviathan figure to bring together the many disparate voices in the game. That begs the question of what form such a body should take. The Minister will not be surprised to know that I believe that the answer is a football levy board. The Minister will be aware, as the Prime Minister is, of my pleas for such a board in the past. I have outlined the case for it to them both. I hope that it has not fallen on deaf ears.

I shall not repeat today the case for such a board, but I want to explain how it could carry out the tasks that would be required of it if it were to take football into the next century and secure a bright future for the game. It could do so by bringing together all the bodies contained within the football body politic, whether administrators, players, representatives of the football authorities or, for the first time, supporters. It could do so under the chairmanship of someone appointed by the Government to do what Lord Justice Taylor could not do—push for and facilitate on a sustained and regular basis the implementation of the Taylor recommendations.

The essence of a levy board was summed up in 1978 by the Rothschild commission on gambling which recommended its creation. Rothschild said:

> "Its funds and its independent standing should provide the leverage to enhance the better management and development of the game . . . it could be the energising agent for radical change."

If that was true in 1978, how much more true is it today after Taylor and Hillsborough?

The levy board would not be based on a government hands-on approach. It would concentrate minds and provide a coherent strategic policy to unite the efforts of the various bodies in the football world. Most important, through its links with the Government, it would be in a position, which no other body is in, to exercise sympathetic influences in development and planning. In doing so, it

could help secure the most prosperous future for the game, for, as the Minister knows, the potential is undoubtedly there.

In the past few years, attendances at league games have risen, with the virtual elimination of hooliganism coupled with a declining arrest rate. We have seen more goals scored per match and a clampdown on cynical play. To cap it all, we have had the shot in the arm provided by the performances of both supporters and teams during Italia 90. Indeed, the Government's supporters should be falling over themselves to don football shirts. After all, it must be one of the few ways in which they will be welcomed back into the European fold with open arms.

This season our domestic clubs will have the chance to gain international accolades for good behaviour and fair play as the England team did in Italy. Most recently, the newly established captain Gary Lineker became only the second player in history to receive an individual award for combining fair play with outstanding success. Gary not only has been and continues to be an outstanding ambassador for the game and for Britain but, as one who has never been booked or sent off at any point in his career, he provides one of the most shining examples to which any young child can aspire. I know that I carry the Minister and the House with me on that. Gary Lineker is acknowledged by the international authorities as the undisputed world leader of the game and an example to players of all nations.

I have been critical of the Government at times during my speech. I hope that the Minister realises that I would have criticised a Government of whatever party if they were responsible for a scenario similar to that which exists today. Constructive criticism in support of the greatest game in the world is never to be decried. I hope that the Minister and the House will accept my comments in that light.

11.23 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Atkins): As ever, it is a delight to find myself at the Dispatch Box. It is not, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, the first time that I have done so, because I answered an Adjournment debate introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) about sport in general.

However, this is my first opportunity to talk about football. The opportunity was provided by the foresight and interest in football of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). He called football our national game but, to be slightly pedantic, I call it our national winter game because we have another game, called cricket, which we play in the summer. It is fair to say that football and cricket are two of the greatest games in the world. However, we are here today to talk about soccer.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for choosing the subject of football. On behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments—which I expected—about the work that my hon. Friend did. It was a difficult time for my hon. Friend, as the House and the hon. Gentleman, with his characteristic generosity, will accept. In the circumstances, he did what the House will accept was his best. The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde also rightly referred to the other work that my hon. Friend did behind the scenes, not only for soccer but in sport generally. I know that my hon. Friend will be grateful for the encouragement and thanks of the hon. Gentleman, who speaks with considerable authority on soccer and many other sports issues. He is an acknowledged expert in the House, whose views cannot be dismissed lightly, although I would not do that anyway.

The hon. Gentleman was right to mention the improvements and changes that have taken place in soccer. They took place largely as a result of the activities of the England team in Italy, before I took office. As he said, the way in which the team played, the skill that the players displayed and the manner in which they conducted themselves both on and off the field was a joy to many people in Britain.

It was refreshing to see the inspired leadership of the captain Gary Lineker, who deservedly has won a multiplicity of fair play awards. He won not only the award in Italy but the new Stanley Matthews award for fair play. He has given a great deal of encouragement to many. As the hon. Gentleman suggested, as the parent of a young son, I regard the image that Gary Lineker projects as one which should be endorsed not only in soccer but in a wide variety of sports.

It is also good to see that there are rising attendances at football matches and that the standards of behaviour both on and off the field have improved in many respects. We wish to be positive about the future of football. We hope that what has happened in recent months and years was a chapter which is closed and that we can turn a new leaf and look towards what can be achieved in the future.

In the time allowed, I wish to touch on how such moves should be taken. Since I took the job as Minister for Sport —at the Deparment of the Environment from July onwards and now at the Department of Education and Science—I have taken the view that it is incumbent on me to listen to what sports administrators, governing bodies and those involved at national level, such as the National Sports Council, the Central Council of Physical Recreation and various other bodies, have to say before I pontificate about what should happen. The hon. Gentleman was, as usual, perceptive when he highlighted the difficulties that a Sports Minister faces in dealing with the various other Departments which have responsibilities for sport.

It would not be proper for me to comment on his invitation to the Prime Minister to upgrade the job to Minister of State. However, I shall ensure that the *Hansard* report of the debate is presented to the Prime Minister, who may choose in due course to react to the hon. Gentleman's interesting proposal.

As I said, I have listened closely to what sports administrators have said. Clearly, I cannot and will not interfere with the management and administration of games or sports. That is a matter for the administrators, but I can cajole and encourage them, raise matters about which I am worried and let them know which aspects I support. It is proper that the Sports Minister, along with hon. Members on both sides of the House who feel strongly about certain matters, should set the agenda and make sure that the sports world understands our anxieties.

We touched briefly on sportmanship. The hon. Gentleman is aware of and shares my anxiety about standards of sportsmanship not only in soccer but across the sporting world. I was delighted at the action taken recently by the Football Association on the Arsenal-Manchester United brawl. Such brawls have no place in

[Mr. Robert Atkins]

football. I hope that that message has got through clearly to two great clubs, to which a fine was relatively insignificant but on which the deduction of points had a more salutary effect. That is crucial.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in his incarnation as Chancellor of the Exchequer, reduced the betting duty by 2·5 per cent. in last year's Budget and thereby provided about £100 million over the next five years to improve football, following the Taylor report. When he was Chancellor—and I hope that, as First Lord of the Treasury, he will not resile from that commitment, in part at least—he said that further funds would be forthcoming for soccer if there was evidence that the football clubs, especially those in the league, were taking action to improve the grounds.

As the hon. Gentleman said correctly, these matters are divided among various Government Departments. If we are talking frankly, we can say that there is an argument for bringing together aspects of the controls. However, although I may have views on that, it is not the case at present. Although my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister understands and shares these concerns—that is one reason why he moved me to the Department of Education and Science—there is a long way to go. It is not for me to comment in any more than the broadest terms about the operation of the matters that fall to the Home Office and to the Foreign Office, although I can touch on the Department of the Environment as I was there recently and I will deal with the planning aspects.

The hon. Gentleman made suggestions about the Football Licensing Authority. I can only pass on to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary his concerns. I have had the opportunity to meet Norman Jacobs, who I find an extraordinarily impressive chairman. I know that he understands and cares about soccer and that he understands and is aware of the problems as perceived by football clubs from the first to the fourth division and beyond. I know that he will do what he can to ensure that the proposal, which my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East said was important, comes into effect.

It is the intention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to bring sections 9 and 13 of the Football Spectators Act 1989 into force as soon as it is appropriate to do so. Section 9, which creates the offence of admitting spectators to unlicensed premises, cannot come into force until the Football Licensing Authority can implement and administer the football licensing scheme. Section 13, which will empower the Football Licensing Authority to require local authorities to include in any safety certificate such terms and conditions as may be specified in a written notice issued by the FLA, will not come into force until my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and the FLA are satisfied that the authority has acquired the necessary staff and expertise to exercise that power. That will depend largely on the recruitment and training of a team of professional inspectors, the majority of whom are expected to be in post by next spring. The hon. Gentleman's point is well taken and I will ensure that I continue to press my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about it.

The hon. Gentleman referred to police charges. Although the headquarters of the Lancashire constabulary are in my constituency and I have a lot to do with the police, I cannot comment on the details of police charges, which are entirely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, I will ensure that the hon. Gentleman's points continue to be brought to my right hon. Friend's attention.

The hon. Gentleman was very concerned about planning. In my previous incarnation, I handled not only sport but planning at the Department of the Environment and I had partial responsibility for the issuing of the policy guidance note that addressed the problem of the building of new stadiums. I have considerable sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has said. I have, on occasion, visited football grounds such as Preston North End, which was one of the founder members of the league and which has had substantial connections with football over the years at all levels. I understand exactly what is involved in the improvements required to stadiums, as do other hon. Members and people involved across the game. I understand the need to improve, to renovate, to rebuild and, in some cases, to build afresh, but we must come to terms with the fact that local planning authorities have their own views as a result of their closeness to their local communities.

In my constituency—I am sure that this is true of many others—local people have firm views about what they want or do not want to see in the green belt and in rural or semi-rural areas. Although one can make suggestions, it is very much a matter for local authorities to express their concern. Durham county cricket club has recently come into the county championship and there has been concern about the proposed new stadium at Chester-le-Street. It is not right for me to prejudice the planning committee's decision in Durham, but I can say that the Department of the Environment decided not to call in that planning application. The development will be major stadium with a variety of sporting facilities. It is planned to be built in an area in which it may cause local controversy.

I am reminded of some of the problems at Bristol Rovers and at other clubs. There are areas that need to be addressed. When I was at the Department of the Environment, I tried to emphasise the importance of local planning authorities understanding what was involved.

Football clubs and those associated with them must discuss planning proposals with the local authority at an early stage. It is no good for them to produce a plan and to present it as a fait accompli to which the planning authority must agree. That is not the way it works, as the hon. Gentleman will understand. Co-operation and consultation are required across the board before decisions are made. We have tried to impress on local authorities that they must consider the matter sympathetically and favourably, but it is a matter for them in the final analysis, as they represent their local communities and have to take them into account. However, the hon. Gentleman's points on the need to consider further development are well understood.

The hon. Gentleman talked about football in the community and I agree with him strongly about what has been achieved. My local club, Preston North End, like so many others, had a ground that was rarely used during the average football week. It is now used 20 hours a day, seven days a week by the local community, not only in Preston, but in the surrounding area, including my own constituency. Schools can hire the ground and youngsters can play in the great stadium where Tom Finney was at his best. Other sporting functions have been held there, such

as a great international between the world hockey champions and the Olympic hockey champions. It was a marvellous match which was played with great style and watched with great interest.

Many other groups use the facilities at Preston which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, has an artificial pitch. That has posed particular problems with the Football Association and with the Football League, and the club will have to pull up the pitch and restore the grass because of FIFA's views and because of the views of professional footballers about playing on grass. That poses a problem for football in the community and for the involvement of clubs. The digging up of the pitch will have a detrimental effect on community involvement at Preston North End. Oldham and Luton face similar problems.

Mr. Pendry: And Hyde United.

Mr. Atkins: I know that Hyde United is an important club in the hon. Gentleman's pantheon of great clubs.

The hon. Gentleman talked about a football levy board and, over the years, he has been well known for expressing strong views on that. I know that he wrote to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer and he has raised the matter with me both privately and publicly. He shares his strong view with my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester).

There is a difference of opinion. I have listened to football clubs, to specialists, to journalists who understand the game and to others. There is quite a division of opinion on the matter. I am coming to the view that perhaps the football levy board is an unnessary bureaucracy. The Football Trust is carrying out remarkable work at the moment and I have spoken to many of the people involved with it and have witnessed their work on the spot-the-ball competition and other activities as a result of the dispensation on the funds made available by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Since I have been involved in soccer, I have become aware of the imperative need for soccer to be able to speak with one voice. At the moment, the Football Association, which is the custodian of the rules and the ultimate authority in the game, and the Football League, through the 92 clubs, represent two different voices. They represent most of soccer's attractions to the public, although not exclusively, because the Vauxhall Conference league and many other smaller clubs have regular and committed attractioins as do small boys' teams. I am president of Bamber Bridge junior football club which runs teams of boys from the age of 11 to 16. All those teams play football to a remarkable standard and they are just as important in many respects as teams like Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur and others of that ilk.

We must address soccer's problems with finance and the need to place bids for the World Cup, the world championships and the European championships. We must also deal with the problem about sponsorship and the fact that the American football logo is better known and better marketed in this country than soccer's logo—if there is one. There is an enormous amount of potential finance available for soccer and I believe that the football authorities understand that.

I have pressed on the president of the Football League and the chairman of the Football Association and their respective officers the need to talk regularly and continually about improvements in relation to a single body to represent football. There should be some reform of the voting structures of both the FA and the Football League. There should be reforms to the FA's very large council and, in the Football League, to the voting structure of the various divisions.

If those improvements can be carried out and people have an opportunity to discuss the future of football at that level, there can be a conjunction of effort. I understand that the FA believes that there cannot be a merger because it is the ultimate authority. However, there should at least be a conjunction between the FA and the Football League so that they can speak with authority about the game, both professionally and in amateur terms.

I am convinced that that is the way forward. The FA and the Football League must recognise that there is pressure for that conjunction from the lowest level of football in playing and spectator terms throughout the game at both amateur and professional level to the management of top league clubs. I believe that they appreciate that, but there is still a long way to go.

I hope that the FA and the Football League will hear the message of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, who speaks with such authority on these matters, and note my views and the views of those who take an interest in the game. Soccer is a great game and it has achieved great things. We invented the game, as we invented so many others, and we gave it to the world. If we are to continue to exercise leadership, having overcome problems of spectator violence and restoring, renovating and renewing stadiums and providing the finance to allow the game to move into the 21st century, the support of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde, of the Government and of the lovers of the game at every level is essential.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising this subject for debate. He will join me in wishing football at every level every success in the 1990-91 season. I hope that we can move from strength to strength and ensure the continuation of the improvements that have already been made both on the field and off it. If they continue, soccer's future is as bright as it has ever been.

Community Charge (Armed Forces)

11.43 am

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I have addressed you before on the community charge. When I last did so, the House was packed and it was the most daunting experience of my parliamentary life to have to try to persuade my colleagues and Back Benchers that my Government had got something less than perfectly right. I lost the day on that occasion by a fairly modest figure, and since that day, two and a half years ago, we have had to live with a community charge that has proved to have been the single greatest mistake made by the Government in this Parliament.

However, that was another day and another age. Far from despairing now, I am full of hope that the new Administration are determined to put matters right and to make the necessary adjustments so that what is a reasonable way of collecting local government finance from all our citizens can be operated fairly because the unfairness rankled most. We look forward to the result of the Government's review, with the help, I hope, of the Opposition parties, so that we can find a way to finance local government for the next decade or so.

However, this morning I want to consider a particular aspect of the community charge which has rankled with me more than any other because, frankly, it was crazier than any other part of the system. I want to consider the way in which the community charge is applied to the armed forces.

Under the rates, service men were required to contribute to local government. That was perfectly right and proper. There is no reason why service men should not make a fair contribution to the costs of local government services, some of which they use. However, they are unique in that they are the only people who have to live and work where they are told. To that extent, they are different from the police force, the fire service, the ambulance service and the civil service. All those people can, if they wish, say, "No; I will not move to Yorkshire. I wish to stay here". That may affect their promotion or careers, but they have the right to say no. A service man does not have that right. he must go where he is told, and live and work where he is told for as long as he is told until he is ordered to move on.

The rates system was sensitive to that and was fair to the service men and to the local authorities. Every soldier, single or married, paid a sort of rate. The charge was averaged and deducted from his pay at source, and it remained the same wherever he was. The Ministry of Defence paid the local authority a rating charge for the barracks, and the local authority had a return from the MOD for the services that it provided. That worked like a charm. Everyone was happy with it and knew where they were. The service men had no complaints and 100 per cent. of the charge was collected because it was deducted at source.

After the change brought about by the introduction of the community charge, although I had views about the principle in general, I held a strong view with regard to the armed services. I believed that the system that operated for the services under the rates should prevail under the community charge. I could see no reason then, and have been shown no reason since, why that system should not prevail except for the dogma which, alas, accompanied the Government's attitude to the imposition of the community charge.

Instead of every service man continuing to contribute to local government by paying an average community charge collected at source and paid over by the Ministry of Defence, the Government decided that they had to treat service men in the same way as everyone else and that they must pay the charge in the area where they happened to be.

I pointed out at the time that that practice would produce anomalies, discontent and unfairness. It has done all those things to the extent that it is now a considerable source of resentment within the services, and I can well understand why. If a soldier is posted from district A to district B, the posting may be accompanied by a "fine", if I can put it that way, of between £400 and £500. If a soldier moved from Wandsworth to Camden in the course of his duty, he would move from paying less than £200 to paying more than £600, with no compensation, no choice and no ability to influence the local authorities through his vote in either place. Soldiers rarely get that chance.

I raised this problem at the beginning of our debates on the community charge with the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Mr. Neubert). I said that the system was unfair and unjust and please would he change it. He wrote me a long letter on 11 January 1989 which, I am afraid, does no more than repeat the dogma that has accompanied this whole issue. He stated:

> "We have decided that members of the Armed Forces in Great Britain will be treated as the rest of the population for the purposes of the Personal Community Charge".

Members of the armed forces are not like the rest of the population. They cannot exercise the choice that can be exercised by the rest of the population.

What has happened has been a sorry tale of how a perfectly fair and reasonable method of ensuring that service personnel make a proper contribution to the cost of local government has been abandoned for a more expensive, more bureaucratic and far more unfair system. As far as I can discern, that was done only for reasons of ideology. I have not been given one practical reason why it had to be done in this way.

It seems particularly stupid to do away with a simple system and to devise a complex one instead. The simplicity of the former average charge is there for all to see. I do not need to develop that point. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) knows the anomalies that have been created because he has had difficulties in his own constituency about which he spoke when he was not a member of the Government rather more robustly than I suspect he will be able to speak today. The soldiers in Salisbury refused to pay because they had their own reasons for thinking that the system was unfair. We had the sorry sight of the courts having to deal with a large number of service personnel who were in default of the community charge.

Let me say straight away that service men, like anybody else, must obey the law. The fact that it is a bad law is neither here nor there. We are all bound by the law of the land, and the service men were wrong to refuse to pay. However, I can understand their resentment because there has been similar resentment in my constituency which has a large number of service personnel and—perhaps more to the point—a large number of transient service personnel. The community charge does not pose them as much of a problem as it does the local authority.

The school of electrical and mechanical engineering, which is located at Burton in the middle of my constituency, runs 12-week courses. Technically, on moving in, the soldiers should pay 12 weeks' worth of the local community charge and go away again. What a ludicrous system—because the soldier then has to be rebated at a different rate from wherever else he was previously for the 12 weeks that he spent in my constituency. That has to be worked out all the time. It is a nightmare for the local authority, which would far rather be without it. It is also a nightmare for those in charge of the service establishments, who are co-operating fully with the local authorities to try to unravel some of the complexities. It is a nightmare for the service men also.

Perhaps more serious than something that is wholly inconvenient is the fact that, when soldiers are sent to Northern Ireland, they are treated differently according to whether they are married or single. Is there any easier way of stirring up discontent when a battalion is moved and parted from families for four months to serve in Northern Ireland in one of the more dangerous jobs that the armed forces have to do than to find that the married soldier, on patrol with the single soldier, is treated differently and that one is being penalised while the other is favoured according to the amount of time that they have spent there? When soldiers go to do unpleasant tasks, the one thing that keeps the whole thing together is what one could call "the equality of misery". A soldier wants to be just as badly off as the chap in the next trench. A difference, especially a financial difference, is the first and most basic cause of discontent, but that is what is happening in Northern Ireland.

Our soldiers in the Gulf have also been in difficulties, although, rather late in the day, that is now being put right. Some have to continue to pay their community charge while sitting in the desert, possibly waiting to go to war. Others have not had to do so because their local authorities have not responded in the same way. However, it should not be for the local authorities to respond. It should not be left to the good councils to say, "We are not going to charge service men the community charge for the period they are in the Gulf," and for other councils to continue to levy the charge—not for political reasons, but because they are not as sensitive. That should not be the system. There should be a system throughout the armed services under which everybody contributes fairly. The Exchequer will get its money and the Department of the Environment can distribute it to the local authorities along with the rest of the grant.

What is even more extraordinary—my hon. Friend may not know this—is that when the system was changed the armed services offered to take on the bureaucratic burden of levying a standard community charge. The armed services offered to make the payment from the Ministry of Defence, which would have raised the charge from service men, to the Department of the Environment so that it could distribute the money fairly to the local authorities. I have to be careful in what I say about this, but this happened at the very highest level. The service chiefs said, "We will do this. It will be our contribution to collecting the charge simply, efficiently and fairly, and we will let you have it." However, the DOE turned that down because those in charge at that time said that a service man must pay his share wherever he happened to be. It was all part of what the Government chose to call "local accountability".

You will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that, because of the number of times he moves, a service man is jolly lucky if he can vote in a general election in the same place more than once, but we have made arrangements so that service personnel can retain their votes. However, that is even less likely in local government elections, given that such by-elections happen at much shorter notice than do parliamentary by-elections and the fact that a service man can move, go away on courses, go to Northern Ireland or Germany or across to Canada to train. He is not likely to be in his local authority area or to be able to play a significant part in local government.

Therefore, a service man cannot exercise the local accountability that was part of the ethos of the community charge that I understood. The Government have done so much to destroy local accountability that it is now practically non-existent. However, that is for another debate on another day, and I look forward with great hope to having that debate on general terms because there have been changes that make me hope that we shall be able to bring about great improvements.

Given that there cannot be local accountability, why, even now, can we not change the system? It would not be complicated. We are coming to the end of the financial year and, by 1 April, the services could comfortably have in place a system whereby they would collect from source a service man's fair and just contribution.

It would be the same for every service man, wherever he is serving in the world. It would make a difference when personnel are posted back to the United Kingdom from overseas. As service men do not pay the community charge in Germany, when they return here they have what they consider a cut in their pay. Of course, it is not a cut in pay; it is just that they now have to pay for a local service for which they did not have to pay before. But that is not the way that a service man looks at it, and nor should he—indeed, nor did he for all the years when he paid rates when he was in Germany or wherever else. The accommodation charges were part and parcel of the whole system.

I am offering my hon. Friend something that he should find very difficult to refuse—a change that will make his life simpler. It is a change that will bring in more revenue for the community charge so that the local authorities get more money. It is a change that will be implemented at no expense to his Department because the load will be taken by the Ministry of Defence. Although the Ministry would have a little more bureaucratic work to do, I believe that it would be relieved by the change because it would iron out many of the anomalies.

We would know that the collectability of the community charge would be 100 per cent., which it was before, but which is not the case now because many service men are getting away with it by being posted at times of the year that make it almost impossible for the local authorities to catch up with them. Above all, it would be a change that would bring to an end a widely felt source of resentment in the services—indeed, I need not tell my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary about that, because he knows about the resentment in his part of the world.

Why can we not have this change? No reason has been given to me by the Department of the Environment or the Ministry of Defence, save the most spurious of ideological reasons, which were trotted out to me repeatedly: that this was the system and this was what was going to happen because the service man must be treated exactly the same as his civilian counterpart. The service man is not the same

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as his civilian counterpart in almost any other aspect of life because he lives within a disciplined organisation, his job differs from a civilian job, and at a moment's notice he may have to go anywhere in the world. We should be able to give him a guarantee that those demands on him will not bring him additional expense because of the way in which local authority finance is limited. He will look on it as a fine for doing his duty.

If my hon. Friend can bring this system to an end and bring a sense of fairness into this tiny part of it, he will see that that is easily done. I hope that that will add more power to his elbow and that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make the whole system much fairer.

12.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): It is a great pleasure to answer this debate, which was initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). We all remember the valiant fight which he put up over a long period. It is good to see him back in his usual place, with the hearty endorsement of his constituents and constituency party in the new era which we face together.

It is important to recognise the service which my hon. Friend has done. Not only has he had a distinguished military service but he has done a service to the House in the way in which he has represented his constituents over many years—a task in which he acquired a reputation for fearless championing of many causes—and the way in which he has steered the important Select Committee on Defence, on which I congratulate him.

My hon. Friend referred to fairness, and I would add a sense of fair play—qualities which I share with him. Perhaps we share those important characteristics because we went to the same school, my hon. Friend attending a mere year or two before me. If one goes to a school as old as ours—Salisbury cathedral school will be 900 years old next year—and sings as sweetly as my hon. Friend——

Mr. Mates: And my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Key: —as I try to, perhaps it is not surprising that we share common values, which include a sense of fair play and justice.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is, unfortunately not able to be here today. He would have been on the Bench beside me, but he is visiting our troops in the Gulf and he has asked me to send his apologies to the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East raised a sensitive and important subject in which he has taken a long interest. He raised it on 8 June 1989 in the debate on the Army and on 18 October 1989 in the debate on the defence estimates. I too have an interest in the proper and fair treatment of the armed forces. My hon. Friend said that I represent a large number of soldiers in my constituency of Salisbury. In fact, there are 14 Ministry of Defence establishments in my constituency, embracing all three services. Therefore, I could hardly have been unaware of these problems. It was a sad time for me last September when a large number of soldiers who had failed to pay the community charge on time were summoned to appear before Salisbury magistrates. They did not all appear, but many did, and I was subsequently able to meet their representatives.

This raises the important issue of the access of soldiers to their Members of Parliament. As my hon. Friend rightly said, they belong to a disciplined profession. They do not easily run to their Members of Parliament. They sometimes think that that will lose them status or credibility or get them into trouble. I went to considerable lengths as a constituency Member to ensure, with the commanding officer of the south-west district, that all the soldiers in his area had unhindered access to their Members of Parliament to discuss this important issue. That assurance was readily given. I believe that all hon. Members will always be available to soldiers and military personnel in all our services. That fundamental right is in no way denied to members of our armed forces.

I welcome the opportunity to restate that position. In terms of local accountability and the important fundamentals of the community charge, it is crucial that those who pay the charge should have the right to express their opinion to their local authorities and to Members of Parliament who approve the legislation. My hon. Friend mentioned voting rights. It is a complicated business. The proxy voting system for service voters is complex. Military personnel can nominate one person in one place to be their proxy and that person is not precluded from casting a vote on their behalf at local or general elections. Service personnel should be reassured on that point and should perhaps make arrangements to ensure that their vote is cast at local as well as general elections.

Mr. Mates: In case my hon. Friend was wondering why I sat down a few minutes early, it was because I forgot to raise one point about local accountability which I should now like to put to him. It concerns the Gurkhas who are stationed in my constituency. This point is not for his Department but for the Ministry of Defence. Everything that my hon. Friend said about the right to vote, local accountability and the right to appoint a proxy goes straight out of the window in terms of the Gurkhas.

One battalion of Gurkhas serves in this country. They have no right to vote. Their families are not here, there are no children here, they need no local schools or local libraries and need almost no local services, and they are paying what amounts to one month's pay in community charge. Hampshire district council, the local authority, is embarrassed at having to charge them. I raised this matter with the Ministry of Defence, which simply said that the Gurkhas were members of the British Army and, like everyone else, must pay their whack.

That is another point of deep resentment which I should have mentioned at the end of my speech. I put it to my hon. Friend in the context of what he said, rightly, about local accountability and the right to vote. The Gurkhas have no right to vote. They are not British citizens. They are here because we require them to be here. They are parted from their families and have no need of the raft of local services that other service men use, yet they pay the full community charge despite being paid less than British soldiers. That is nothing short of a scandal.

Mr. Key: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter. It gives me the opportunity to explain how the arrangements affect the Gurkhas, for whom I have the highest regard. I am not a military man. It is true that in

my school cadet force I rose to the dizzy heights of company sergeant major, but that was a bit different from the real thing. However, I met the Gurkhas in the Falklands shortly after hostilities ceased. I saw the remarkable strength and characteristics of that proud body of men. When I have developed my theme, I shall deal with the points raised by my hon. Friend.

It is true that not all service personnel currently register to vote and we have been seeking ways of increasing that number. Only about two thirds of service personnel currently register to vote and I hope that through this debate we shall encourage more of them to ensure that their right to vote is exercised in this country. We encourage service personnel and their spouses to register. They can adopt the service system with the service proxy if they wish. I am assured by my colleagues in the Ministry of Defence that annual reminders are provided through notice board displays, and that further advice is available at any time.

I thought that it would be helpful to provide some background about the community charge. One of the main policy objectives of the charge is that everyone should pay something towards the cost of their local services. That has been accepted by most people in this country. We have made exceptions for certain categories of people and ensured that those at the lower end of the income scale are eligible for rebates of up to 80 per cent.

Like all other adult residents in Britain, members of the armed forces make use of local services and are entitled to vote in local elections. It has been argued that service personnel do not make as great a use of local authority services as their civilian counterparts. That argument is largely without foundation, but it is certainly a source of trouble and misunderstanding, as I have found in my constituency. People have come to my surgery or have written to local newspapers about the problem. It is often Army wives who are incensed about the issue saying, "Why should we pay the community charge when we live in married quarters in a garrison town?"

In fact, service personnel do make use of local services. They enjoy the benefit of local emergency services, and they do not all just sit in their garrison towns or barracks. They are part of our community. In my constituency, we welcome the fact that service personnel make an important input into the life of the local community, and we respond by treating them as part of that community. They benefit from emergency services such as fire and police if they are required. Perhaps people forget that roads and street lighting have to be provided, and that may not be the case if the Army or the Royal Air Force were not present in a particular location.

All the support services for those establishments are provided by local authorities. Even refuse disposal is ultimately the responsibility of the local refuse disposal authority. Some soldiers have told me that that is nonsense. They say that part of their duty is to sweep out their barracks and empty it into the dustbin, which is then taken to another part of the barracks and transported somewhere else in an Army truck. The "somewhere else" is a tip provided by the local authority. The Ministry of Defence and local authorities often negotiate contracts for the disposal of waste, and it may be that the Ministry of Defence pays directly for that service. However, more commonly, it is done as part of a local authority service, and the refuse is disposed of in the proper manner and to the highest environmental standards.

The local recreational facilities such as libraries and swimming pools are used by service personnel. Also, service personnel with children will be using local state-maintained schools. Their children make a great contribution to the life of those schools. In my constituency, those children, who have often travelled the world, make an enormous contribution that would be missing if the service personnel were not present. Indeed, many schools have been constructed by the local education authority almost exclusively for the use of service personnel.

Although many of the services may be applicable only to married members of the armed forces, single personnel living in barracks are in no worse position than their civilian counterparts for whom the same services are available. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East has had the argument put to him, "Why should I have such a high community charge when I am a single man of 22? I am earning my living and paying my taxes and I do not use the social services available for the elderly or live in a council house and I do not have children at local schools." The same argument applies to those of us who do not use a particular local government service.

Mr. Mates: That is right. It is part of the debate and part of the resentment. Everything that my hon. Friend the Minister has said is an argument for saying that service personnel must contribute their share. That is not the point of my raising this debate. I know that they must contribute their share, but why should they have to contribute a different share according to the whim of where they are posted over which they have no control? That is the point.

Mr. Key: I accept what my hon. Friend says about the lack of control over their own lives and where they reside. I shall come to that later.

In the circumstances, I think that it is accepted by everybody that armed forces personnel should pay something. Under the law as it stands, they must pay their share of the personal community charge. As my hon. Friend said, the law is the law and it must be obeyed by service personnel as by everybody else, even Opposition Members who currently refuse to pay their community charge. How unfair it is at Christmas that rich Members of Parliament should be refusing to pay their community charge when their less fortunate constituents are having to pay it for them and make their contribution towards the cost of local services. How selfish can one be?

We do, however, recognise that members of the armed forces are in a special situation. There are a large number of them in different parts of the country. They are also subject to posting over which they have no control and which is generally for short periods. Like other people, members of the armed forces are subject to the personal community charge in the borough or district in which they have their sole or main residence. In the vast majority of cases, it should be straightforward to determine where a person has his sole or main residence.

Given this special situation of service personnel, we were keen to see that all community charges registration officers came to similar decisions when determining the main residence of people serving in the armed forces.

I anticipate that my hon. Friend may say that that has not always been the case, that CCROs have not always taken the same views, and that sometimes, even within a

[Mr. Key]

garrison town that happens to straddle a local authority boundary, different decisions have been made. That is why, early last year, we issued guidance to all registration officers. It was non-statutory guidance on the registration of service personnel and was agreed with the Ministry of Defence and the local authority associations.

It says that single personnel detached or posted to service units and living in barracks or mess accommodation for periods in excess of 61 days will be regarded as having their sole or main residence in that accommodation as from day one. This is not an arbitrary figure but recognises that, under Queen's regulations, personnel in barrack accommodation do not have a right to return to that accommodation if they are away for more than 61 days.

Married personnel living in married quarters or in private accommodation will be regarded as having their sole or main residence with their families, while married personnel who are posted away from their marital home for periods of unaccompanied service in excess of six months will be regarded as having moved their sole and main residence to the new location as from day one. Single personnel who are householders will also be covered by this rule.

I am relieved to say that this guidance has been updated so that married personnel did not have to change their sole and main residence simply because they were posted to a different base, and that the area in which their marital home was would remain the area in which they were registered. That advice has no statutory basis and registration officers can disregard it if they feel that it is inappropriate to an individual's circumstances. I understand that CCROs are generally following the guidelines. It is important to set out these details so that my hon. Friend can see that we are aware of the special position of members of the armed forces and that we take it into account when preparing guidance.

A good example of our response is the situation of service personnel in the Gulf. Recently, we issued guidance on this to local authorities, after constructive dialogue with the Ministry of Defence. If someone is posted overseas for a period which is unknown from the outset, local authorities have been advised to remove them from their community charge register. In that way, such a person would make no payments during his absence. No direct action to chase payments or recover arrears will be taken against personnel temporarily overseas. Notices and reminders will be sent to their home base. The effect will be to relieve service personnel from worries about their community charge. Although the guidance was issued as a result of the situation in the Gulf, those arrangements will also apply to other postings which are regarded technically as being overseas for these purposes, such as Germany and Northern Ireland.

In a few cases, some personnel posted overseas, and therefore ceasing to be liable for the personal community charge, may become liable for a higher standard charge. If that happens because of a posting to the Gulf, the Ministry of Defence has agreed to reimburse the excess. Those arrangements will facilitate the pledge of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence that no service personnel posted to the Gulf will be worse off as a result of that posting.

We have also brought forward new measures covering new classes and multipliers for standard charge properties. One of those new classes is for property which is empty because the person who owns it occupies another property which is job-related. The maximum multiplier for that class of property will be one half. That is intended to help people who have to live in job-related accommodation, and it should be of assistance to many service families.

Mr. Mates: I am fascinated to hear all that is going on to remove some of the anomalies. Does my hon. Friend agree that multipliers, special arrangements for empty properties, zero rating and arrangements for overseas postings could all be avoided if we returned to the old system under which a service man paid a standard contribution from source throughout his career? Would that not be simpler and fairer?

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has said that nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out. I cannot say that we should return to the old system. We may or we may not when our right hon. Friend has completed the present review. Obviously, I listen carefully to my hon. Friend's advice.

My hon. Friend raised two specific points. He suggested that there should be a single averaged community charge. I am sure that he will recognise that to do so would undermine the accountability principle of the community charge, in that the armed forces would be cushioned against the effects of the spending levels, the provision of services and the efficiency or inefficiency of the authority in which they live. The converse would also be the case, in that an average charge would stop members of the armed forces from benefiting from lower charges. A member of the armed forces could pay less or more for the same services available to a civilian.

Mr. Mates: Was that not precisely the case with rates? Service personnel were not insulated against low-rated or high-rated areas. They took the rough with the smooth, and over the years it worked out fairly. If the Government were not concerned about that in the era of the rates, why this sudden concern in the era of the community charge?

Mr. Key: It is because we are a listening Government. We would not wish to see our soldiers having to take the rough with the smooth if we could think of a better system.

The Ministry of Defence recognises that members of the armed forces living in public accommodation whether married quarters, mess or barracks, have no choice over where they live, as my hon. Friend pointed out. They are ordered to a particular place and to specific accommodation over which they have no control or choice. That could mean that they are moved to an area with a very high community charge, whereas a colleague may be sent to an area with a low charge. The Ministry of Defence has recognised that and has made arrangements under which no member of the armed forces, or their spouse, who is living in service accommodation should pay more than a service average community charge for such accommodation, plus £1 per week. That is dealt with by a scheme of accommodation charge refunds.

For the current year, the service average community charge is £325, so with the addition of £52 the maximum individual personal charge payment for any member of the armed forces is £377. The cost of the scheme, estimated at

£1·1 million in the current year, has been taken into account by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body in setting the general level of accommodation charges.

Obviously, if service personnel are posted to an area with a lower charge than the average service community charge, they pay that lower charge. Personnel in public accommodation can therefore benefit from low levels of community charge, yet there is a generous limit on their maximum liability. They can pay no more than £377, whereas the maximum they could be liable to pay is £548, which many civilians must pay. Those arrangements go a long way towards alleviating the situation which my hon. Friend described.

The second point that my hon. Friend raised concerned the treatment of Gurkhas. I bow to no one in my admiration of these soldiers who have so often fought for this country.

It may be helpful if I set out how Gurkhas are paid. The basic pay of the Gurkha in the British Army is set by the Indian Army under the provisions of the 1947 tripartite agreement between India, Nepal and the United Kingdom. Under the terms of the agreement, the United Kingdom can provide allowances to Gurkhas serving away from Nepal, and separate Gurkha additions have been set for Brunei, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

The calculation of the United Kingdom addition starts with the baseline of the British soldier's pay. That is abated to take account of the fact that Gurkhas receive a resettlement grant on their discharge and that they do not pay national insurance contributions. Gurkhas do not pay for their food and accommodation, so their pay is abated by the equivalent of the single soldier's food and accommodation charge. The result of all that is that, financially, a single Gurkha is in a similar position to his British counterpart.

When the community charge was introduced, the rates element of a single British soldier's accommodation charge was removed. That means that the single Gurkha soldier's pay abatement is smaller. The pay of a married Gurkha is not abated by food and accommodation charges, which puts him in a similar position to his British counterpart.

Since the Gurkhas are an integral part of the British Army, and when stationed in this country their pay is based on British soldiers' rates of pay, there are no grounds for singling them out for special treatment. The only case for treating them differently would be if they were financially disadvantaged by the community charge. As I have explained, we have sought to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged in that respect.

This has been more than just an interesting debate—it has been an important one. I hope that my hon. Friend will be left with the realisation that members of the armed forces are treated fairly under the communtiy charge and that, within the bounds of the system, the Government have done all that they can to recognise the special position of service personnel.

As a constituency Member of Parliament, I acknowledge the special circumstances under which service personnel live, both as single service men and as part of families. Those problems are familiar to both my hon. Friend and myself. The Government have sought to ensure the basic tenets of justice and fair play to which I referred at the beginning of my remarks.

Mr. Mates: I am delighted that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is conducting a review, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept my remarks as formal input in that regard. When that review has been completed, perhaps someone will let me know how judgment has been reached on what I regard as an unfair situation, and how it is proposed to change it.

Mr. Key: I am delighted to give my hon. Friend an undertaking that his comments will be regarded as a formal representation for the purposes of the review. I shall continue to look forward to my hon. Friend's contributions, and I repeat my gratitude to him for raising the issue. It falls to me to wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East a very happy Christmas.

Royal Assent

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1990

Fraserburgh Harbour Order Confirmation Bill

Housing (Wakefield)

12.30 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am grateful for an opportunity to raise the problems of the housing crisis in Wakefield. No doubt local authorities in other parts of the country face similar crises. I shall attempt to be as factual and constructive as I can and to put the points of which I have been advised as I understand them.

Wakefield metropolitan district council's housing committee recently approved a five-year strategic local housing plan, which has the stated intention of providing an effective, efficient and caring service to people living in both public and private sector accommodation—paying particular attention to those having special needs and to maintaining a commitment to equal opportunity.

Wakefield will be confronted by a major problem in the immediate future, in the form of insufficient resources with which to provide a housing service that will adequately meet demand. Even Wakefield—a local authority which efficiently provides services, as is demonstrated by its performance indicators being far better than average; its voids are only 1·1 per cent. of stock, and its arrears are only 2·5 per cent. of debit—needs adequate resources if it is to be effective.

Wakefield's public and private housing stock will continue to deteriorate unless the controls that prevent its metropolitan district council from raising the finance to fund necessary investment are relaxed. For many years, Wakefield managed without subsidy or resorting to general rate fund contributions. The full costs of the public sector housing service have been met by the rent income from the authority's tenants.

The last 10 years have seen a decline in the number of new-build dwellings and since 1988 no new schemes have been incorporated in Wakefield's capital programme. As many as 1,000 dwellings have been sold at a discount under the right-to-buy arrangements, and the total stock now available for letting is 20 per cent. less than 10 years ago. That has resulted in a waiting list numbering 12,300. Of those applicants, 77 per cent. require rehousing, not merely transfers, and 34 per cent. require accommodation for the elderly.

Ten years ago, young couples living in lodgings and on the waiting list for council accommodation could have expected an offer within two months. Currently, young couples starting out in life, single parents and families living in lodgings, face a wait of 12 to 18 months. There is a definite need for more single-person accommodation. As new-build schemes are totally unaffordable, family houses are having to be converted in an attempt to ease the problem, but that initiative only scratches the surface.

Will this country for ever have to live with a reputation for having young people who must live in cardboard boxes or in temporary hostel accommodation? A problem that was once confined to the capital, is now spreading throughout the country. Wakefield is attempting to follow the guidelines to work with other bodies and associations. However, can we expect housing associations to build 1,000 houses per year for rent at an affordable price?

Wakefield is at the centre of a mining and industrial area which has experienced unprecedented reductions in the work force in recent years. With more than 60 per cent. of tenants in receipt of housing benefit, many families and young people dare not take the risk of a long-term mortgage liability, even if they could afford the repayments at present.

Wakefield gives an annual revenue cash support to the housing association which took over ex-British Coal properties, which were being auctioned off over the heads of the existing tenants. These properties have been neglected for so many years by British Coal that they now need a programme of structural and environmental improvements, which will have to be undertaken from the ever-reducing housing investment programme allocation.

The new capital controls and the use of capital receipts have meant more restrictions on the resources available, resulting in an investment in 1990-91 which is only half that of 1989-90. The amount of capital investment for the public sector is a mere £150 per dwelling, which, as hon. Members will appreciate, does not go far these days.

Persistent lack of definite housing investment programme allocations and changes in the use of prescribed capital receipts has meant considering alternative ways to maintain reasonable housing conditions by improving the housing stock. Such cuts have certainly affected the council's ability to carry out full-scale housing improvements. Although properties are maintained to a reasonable standard, many thousands of post-war properties built in the 1950s and 1960s lack modern up-to-date fixtures and fittings. The council has had to reduce the standard of improvements to two basic elements: the provision of central heating and window replacements with draught-sealing qualities.

This year the Government withdrew subsidy under the grants system for aids and adaptations for disabled tenants in the public sector. Last year, of the 4,580 referrals for adaptation work, 1,067—23 per cent.—were for public sector tenants. With ever-increasing demand for this service, such expenditure now takes one sixth of the admissible basic HIP allocation.

The council has a statutory acquisition obligation. The statutory acquisition of designated defective pre-cast, reinforced dwellings continues seriously to affect the council's resources. In the Wakefield area, 172 pre-cast reinforced properties have been sold by British Coal and to date 97 of these properties have been purchased by the council, plus 182 which were previously in council ownership. Nearly one sixth of the council's basic HIP allocation is spent on acquisition of PRC dwellings.

Although Estate Action funding gives local authorities the chance to bid for extra resources, we must recognise that 50 per cent. of the capital cost still has to be found by the council from within its own resources. That leads to high capital investment in one small sector of the housing stock, to the detriment of other properties which are deteriorating through lack of investment. While it may resolve the problems on one estate, others are queuing up behind. The whole question of funding Estate Action projects requires review, so that 100 per cent. of the cost is supported by supplementary credit approvals.

Like all other authorities, we also have the problem of care in the community, as those initiatives have to be pursued, despite the deferral of the Government's proposals. Wakefield has within its boundaries two major regional resources—a hospital for the mentally ill and one for the mentally handicapped—which are discharging long-term patients into the community. The local council, the local health authority and housing associations are for

ever attempting to find the resources to cater for the need to provide accommodation and the supervision that is necessary for such clients.

The new financial regime that controls subsidy paid to the housing revenue account will ensure that rent increases are in line with the Government's guidelines and more, owing to the inadequate inflation provision of a mere 5·5 per cent. for management and maintenance. Such rent increases will be necessary without any improvement in services. In 1991-92, the tenants of Wakefield, who are not receiving housing benefit, will probably be contributing to the rebate for their neighbours who are.

The lack of housing investment does not only affect the public sector. Following an expensive appraisal of the district's older housing stock, the council embarked, in 1979, on a 10-year improvement programme, with 82 general improvement areas proposed. Some 11 years later, with the strategy only half complete, owing to massive cuts in local authority housing finance, the council has been forced to re-evaluate the condition of the older housing stock to take account of the substantial changes contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The council has also made a significant commitment to continue its area improvement programme, and has recently completed its first neighbourhood renewal assessment, as required by circular 6/90, before considering the declaration of renewal areas. The survey relates to 3,000 pre-1919 properties; it studied not only housing conditions but the socio-economic status of the local households. It revealed that 2,672 properties—80 per cent. of the total—needed extensive repairs, while 1,925 —64 per cent.—were unfit for habitation. More than 30 per cent. of households in the area were in receipt of means-tested benefits; 56 per cent. of households had a net weekly income of below £150. Over 80 per cent. received less than the national average, while 15 per cent. contained people of pensionable age; 76 per cent. had no savings, or at best insignificant amounts.

It appears from the survey's detailed analysis that the council is required to invest some £50 million over the next 10 years if it is to provide decent homes for the local community into the 21st century. The staggering repair bill for that area alone must be seen in the context of other demands on the housing capital allocations.

I am well aware that the Minister recently visited Castleford, and, in particular, the Smawthorne review area, which is involved in the improvement programme. I understand that he saw the completion of the first neighbourhood renewal assessment at Smawthorne. The council is now embarking on a major reassessment of its area renewal programme. It is estimated that 15,000 homes in the district need substantial repairs, that 2,500 properties lack basic amenities and that 4,300 are statutorily unfit—although that may well be an underestimate now.

Given the amount of unfitness revealed by the survey, it is estimated that a staggering £250 million—at least—will need to be invested to preserve the fabric of Wakefield's old housing stock. Like many other authorities, Wakefield faces the problem of houses in multiple occupation—HMOs. During 1989, the council carried out a detailed HMO stock condition survey, which revealed that many people were living in the most squalid conditions imaginable. Eighty-four per cent. of properties lack adequate means of escape in case of fire; 32 per cent. were considered unfit for habitation; 80 per cent. lack adequate sanitary and washing facilities; 84 per cent. were not in a satisfactory state of repair; 66 per cent. of tenants experienced difficulties in persuading landlords to carry out repairs, and 40 per cent. of properties failed to comply with the HMO management regulations.

Such property houses many elderly, single and vulnerable members of society. Their number is growing at an alarming rate, due to the inadequacy of alternative accommodation provided for vulnerable groups by socially responsible landlords.

In response to the growing housing crisis, the council has developed a housing aid service. It provides information, advice and advocacy on a wide range of housing matters. Use of the housing aid centre has risen consistently and dramatically since it opened. The combined effects of the Housing Act 1988, the Social Security Act 1986, the recent benefit changes, the introduction of the poll tax and the Government's high interest rate policy continue to have a serious impact on the local community, as reflected in the use of the centre.

Between April 1989 and March 1990, the housing aid service dealt with the following problems: 1,535 benefit inquiries, 376 cases of debt counselling, 322 cases of harassment and illegal eviction, 917 people looking for accommodation, 243 cases of relationship breakdowns, 728 mortgage problem cases and 874 cases relating to security of tenure. Many of those cases are the direct result of the Government's policy to deregulate rents and high interest rates.

The housing aid centre also dealt with 598 cases of homelessness and 917 cases of people looking for accommodation. The vast majority of them come from non-priority groups. They are mainly single people who are destined to end up sleeping rough or living in squalid conditions in multi-occupied properties. I never thought that I would live to see the day when people in my constituency had to face such conditions. When I left the Wakefield metropolitan district council in 1978, having been its housing chairman, people could expect to get accommodation within two months of making an application. During the last 10 years, the outlook has deteriorated to the extent that I have described.

The council has reacted positively to the new grants system. More than 1,000 inquiries were received during the first six months. Given the resources available for house renovation grants, the problem has become insoluble. Under the new income assessment procedure, 52 per cent. of all households assessed had a nil contribution to make. That highlights the low incomes and the poverty faced by many people in the district. In total, 80 per cent. make contributions of less than £2,000. With average repair costs approaching only £10,000, it makes economic sense to preserve communities by providing warm, dry, well-repaired and affordable homes. However, a considerable burden has been placed on the council by its overall housing allocation.

The means test for grants poses its own problems in many cases. Many people, particularly the elderly, resent the intrusive questions associated with the tests and refuse to give the information required. In addition, the means test takes no account of existing housing costs. Many households, in particular young, first-time buyers, are advised that their contribution will be substantially above what they can afford. The Government must change their policy now and target sufficient resources not only on

[Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse]

people but on property when the council considers that comprehensive rehabilitation of its older housing stock is necessary.

I gave the Minister notice of the contents of my speech, so he will be familiar with it. I shall therefore omit some of the points that I intended to make, if the Minister will reply in writing to them.

The 1991-92 HIP allocation for Wakefield of only £11·14 million is inadequate to meet the Department's indicative spending amounts of £6·4 million for public sector borrowing, £500,000 for housing association work and £6·8 million for grant-eligible works. That makes a total of £13·7 million, yet the 25 per cent. use of capital receipts is reducing because tenants fear high mortgage rates. Capital income is reducing because few houses are being sold.

I recognise that no Government have a bottomless pit of money, but the shocking deterioration in our housing stock in the past 10 years cannot be met and put right overnight. Will the Government examine the feasibility of allowing local authorities the freedom to raise finance on the open market, similar to housing associations? I accept that the Government will never provide adequate resources to meet demand, but will they merely relax the controls to allow local authorities to use their own initiatives and resources to resolve the problem?

If not, will the Minister say how Wakefield can provide a service that meets the needs and demands of 40,000 tenants, 8,000 potential tenants and owners and private-sector tenants who have a right to decent accommodation?

Only yesterday, it was announced that the crime rate in West Yorkshire has increased by 20 per cent. Although I do not condone that or place all the blame at the door of the housing problem, when people get desperate and have nowhere to put their head down they are attracted to petty crime. I hope that the Minister will appreciate that point.

12.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on his success in obtaining the debate and on the forcefulness with which he put his points.

One of my first duties, three days after taking up my post, was to visit the hon. Gentleman's constituency and to launch Wakefield council's area regeneration project at Smawthorne, which is one of the first in the country. I received a warm and friendly welcome from the council and the people of Wakefield and, despite the brevity of my visit, I was able to see many positive things happening in his constituency.

I was sorry, therefore, that the hon. Gentleman chose to paint a rather pessimistic picture of housing in Wakefield district. That did less than justice to the efforts of the local authority in tackling some of the problems. I am grateful to him for notifying me yesterday of the points that he would make today, which I shall try to deal with in the nine minues that he has left me. I dare say that it will be possible to write to him about the points that I cannot cover.

One of the hon. Gentleman's main arguments was that the resources for the district are inadequate to allow it to undertake everything that it felt it should be doing. It is rare for any authority to feel that it has sufficient resources to do everything that it would like.

Taking up the suggestion that the hon. Gentleman made at the end of his speech, I am afraid that an open-ended policy on local authority borrowing would do nothing to ensure that spending resulted in good value for money. It would certainly be contrary to the Government's long-standing commitment to control public spending and reduce inflation.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning recently announced a housing investment programme allocation for Wakefield of £11,104,000 for next year, compared with £10,517,000 for the current year and £5,235,000 for 1989-90. The increase in allocation between 1989-90 and 1990-91 reflects the requirement under the new financial regime that local authorities should set aside a proportion of their capital receipts against debt. It also reflects the greater targeting allowed by the revised capital control system and by the Government's ability to take into account in their calculations a proportion of the usable capital receipts available to authorities. I note that Wakefield's expenditure in 1989-90 was approximately double that of 1988-89, mainly because of the use of accumulated capital receipts. Although expenditure in the current year is expected to fall back from that peak, I hope that the surge in spending in 1989-90 has alleviated some of the housing problems that now require attention.

It is also open to the council to propose schemes for improvements to the stock on estates which could attract additional funding from our expanded and highly successful Estate Action programme, which now stands at £268 million. Success here could release funds for the council to use elsewhere, but, unfortunately, it appears that Wakefield has not so far felt able to put forward bids to the extent that one might expect, given the housing needs to which the hon. Gentleman referred. Over the past five years, Wakefield has attracted only £2·371 million, 3·1 per cent. of the regional total.

A further source of funding is the current energy efficiency initiative, which will provide up to £10 million in the next financial year and £50 million in the following one towards worthwhile schemes put forward by local authorities. My regional office has recently written to the authorities to invite bids.

It is also possible for an authority to utilise the useable proportion of its in-year and accumulated receipts, as it sees fit. In addition, it can make contributions to its capital spending programme from its revenue income. An obvious source of such income would be its rents, which, in the case of Wakefield, are somewhat below the current regional average.

One of the features of the new capital control system is that a proportion of all local authority receipts should be set aside against existing or future debts. It is right that some provision should be made out of the proceeds of sales of local authority assets for the debts incurred in their original acquisition or purchase. This limitation also gives Ministers the opportunity to take into account in the housing investment programme the receipts which authorities obtain in areas where housing needs are less pressing. Those resources can be recycled to areas, such as the north of England, where they are most needed.

The hon. Member eloquently set out his anxiety about homelessness in the Wakefield district. I can assure him

that the Government, too, are anxious about homelessness. It is in the major cities, and especially in the pressure areas of London and the south-east, that homelessness presents the most serious difficulties.

None the less, I can understand councils elsewhere being worried about the problem of homelessness, especially where families with young children are involved. I applaud those councils who are prepared to use their expertise and their imagination in tackling it. I commend Wakefield's record in avoiding the need to house families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. I know that Wakefield is keen to see more hostel accommodation provided and is prepared to work with the housing association movement to achieve that end. Nor is it only with hostels that housing associations can help. This year has seen the Housing Corporation's resources increase yet again; and they are expected to continue to do so for some time. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning recently announced that the corporation's gross expenditure for 1993-94 is expected to exceed £2 billion, a 65 per cent. increase over the current year.

Local authorities have, for some time, been encouraged to adopt a more entrepreneurial and enabling role towards housing provision. With their ability to offer financial assistance to private landlords, including housing associations, and their capacity to assemble land for housing purposes, local authorities have an unrivalled opportunity to influence the future of housing in their area.

Housing associations are now even better placed than ever before to make a significant contribution to meeting the needs of the homeless. To do this they can obtain assistance from local authorities, in the form of cheap or free land or through grants of one sort or another, with funding from the Housing Corporation and from their own sources of private sector finance.

The Housing Corporation recently announced its intention that 50 per cent. of the general needs housing developments which it funds should be targeted to dealing with homelessness problems. Together, the housing association movement and well managed and go-ahead local housing authorities should be capable of filling any gap left by the main private rented and owner occupied sectors. In this respect, I commend Wakefield for the positive way in which it took on the task of supporting a housing association in maintaining former British Coal properties in productive use.

Another problem that Wakefield has consistently drawn to our attention is the condition of its private sector stock. There is no doubt that, although not facing the worst problems in the region, the council has to deal with some difficult problems. In this area, the new renovation grants system should be welcomed. The complexities and restrictions of the old system have been swept aside. A test of resources now helps to ensure that grants are targeted to those people most in need of assistance.

Wakefield has also expressed concern about the problems that the council faces because of the high demand for renovation grants which local authorities are under a duty to pay where an applicant is an owner-occupier living in unfit property. The council has applied to the Department for a supplementary credit approval to assist it in finding the resources to pay such grants. That bid, together with those from other authorities, is currently being assessed and a decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Wakefield is also at the forefront of activity in the new area renewal categories and should be applauded for its willingness to take on the task of preparing and declaring the Smawthorne area. It is worth noting here that the council received an undertaking from the Department to provide resource cover of up to £555,000 subject to the relevant works being undertaken.

I am pleased to see Wakefield's initiative in setting up its housing aid service, which will be of inestimable value to the public and to the council.

The opportunities for a committed local authority such as Wakefield to use its expertise should enable it to meet the needs of all those who must look for social rented accommodation in the area.

Scotch Whisky (Excise Duty)

1 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): The House will know that my interest in Scotch whisky is purely a constituency interest and that, as a teetotal Member of Parliament, I am motivated largely by my recognition of the fact that the Scotch whisky industry is Scotland's premier exporting industry. Unlike oil and gas, whisky is not finite. The barley, the grain and the water are all renewable. The skills and the knowledge of how to produce the whisky are passed on from generation to generation. If we husband the resources and maintain the quality, provided we do not foul the market, this marvellous wealth and job-creating product will continue for ever.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who is adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association; and I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Under-Secretary of State, to the Front Bench. I know that he, like me, has taken a long-standing interest in the well-being of the Scotch whisky industry. I have already made a contribution towards maintaining the quality. The Scotch Whisky Act 1988 was the result of my private Member's Bill. I now look to the Government to play their part to ensure that this wealth-creating product has a continuing European and worldwide growth share of the drinks market. That market is as much a fashion market, and taxation and local conditions can have a massive impact on spending patterns and habits.

When the Conservatives came to office in 1979, the Scotch whisky industry was in a parlous state. Stocks were high, distilleries were being closed and the bottling and blending plants were on short time. Sensible taxation policies changed all that and today, the industry is reopening distilleries, bottling and blending plants are busy and stocks are far more in balance. The industry thanks the Government for their sensible taxation policy.

I welcome the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) to the Opposition Front Bench, where he should have been years ago.

As a Conservative Member, I have to be an optimist. I am optimistic that Ministers will listen carefully to what I have to say and that, as in previous years, they will respond positively to my proposals. It is, after all, in their interests as well as in the interests of the people of Scotland that the Scotch whisky industry should continue to prosper. Why do I say that?

The Treasury benefits each year to the tune of more than £1,000 million, which is made up of £750 million in excise duty and about £250 million in value added tax. The contribution of Scotch to the Treasury is equivalent to almost £20 for every individual in the United Kingdom.

It is interesting to note that the United Kingdom is the second largest market in the world for Scotch whisky. That is important to us. However, in contrast to its overseas competitors, Scotch whisky is penalised in its own home market by an inequitable tax regime that discriminates against it and other spirits in favour of wine and beer.

It would be an understatement to say that the Scotch whisky industry was extremely disappointed by the 1990 Budget decision to widen the already substantial excise duty discrimination against spirits in favour of wine and beer. The industry and Scottish Members of all parties had understood that the Government accepted the justice of the case for seeking a change in the United Kingdom's structure of excise duties.

The Scotch whisky industry is no lame duck industry with special pleadings and in need of a prop. It is an export success industry which exports more than 90 per cent. of everything produced amounting to £1,500 million worth of exports. It is unquestionably one of the United Kingdom's winners. Consequently, it makes no sense to its export efforts to weaken its important home markets.

It is in the national interest to introduce a structure of excise duties under which all alcoholic drinks are taxed at the same rate per degree of alcohol. The industry and I recognise that such a system cannot be introduced overnight. However, could not the differentials in the duty on different drinks be phased in over a period of, say, three years?

Why do we need to act now? I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will think carefully before she replies and will accept the logic of the case. I ask her to bear in mind the compelling arguments for the reforms that I am proposing. I believe that it is in the national interest to end discrimination against an industry that makes such a major contribution to this country's economic prosperity through employment, corporate strength, Exchequer revenues and export earnings.

About 16,000 people are directly employed in the production of Scotch, and 95 per cent. of the jobs are in Scotland. Many of those jobs are in constituencies such as mine, a large rural constituency.

The industry also supports many other jobs in related sectors such as retailing, transport and tourism and in the many activities that supply inputs to production like bottling, distribution and marketing, which involve farming, engineering, glass production, construction, packaging, advertising and many other services.

Scotch whisky contributes to the corporate strength of the United Kingdom drinks industry as a core element of some of the United Kingdom's largest companies. Three of the four largest drinks companies in the world—Guinness, Allied Lyons and Grand Metropolitan—are British-owned, and more than 120 United Kingdom companies are producers or traders of Scotch whisky.

As I said earlier, the industry contributes more than £1,000 million to Exchequer revenues. I only wish that every other industry could contribute so handsomely to the Exchequer's coffers.

In the year to July 1990, Scotch exports were valued at more than £1,500 million. Scotch whisky is sold in every country that permits its import, and I wish that that could be said of all British products. In value terms, it is the United Kingdom's fifth largest manufacturing export, and it is the largest export to the important market of Japan, earning more than 5 per cent., of the total value of United Kingdom exports to that country. In that regard, I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench for their magnificent efforts in recent years to improve the market in Japan.

Scotch exports make a major contribution to the United Kingdom's balance of trade. The trading account on alcoholic drinks products shows a trading surplus that is entirely due to Scotch. Indeed, 98 per cent. of our wine consumption is imported, producing an annual trading deficit of £760 million. Surprisingly—as a teetotaller, I was certainly surprised—we also have a deficit on trade in beer.

Scotch whisky alone is responsible for turning a trading deficit of £867 million on other alcoholic drinks into an overall surplus in the United Kingdom's interest of over £400 million. The export earnings of Scotch per employee are £80,000, which is four times that of the engineering and manufacturing industries, eight times that produced by those in the food, drink and tobacco industries, and more than twice that produced by chemicals and man-made fibres.

In contrast to its export success, Scotch has faced intensive competition in its own domestic market in the United Kingdom, especially from imported wine. This is where excise duty really bites. Scotch whisky's share of domestic expenditure on alcoholic beverages is falling and has been falling for many years. A major contributory factor is that Scotch carries much higher excise duties in a market where the general level of excise duties is high by the standards of other countries. Domestic sales of Scotch are stagnant and have never recovered from the sharp falls of the early 1980s when there was an almost 18 per cent. drop over five years. In the first six months of 1990, home sales of Scotch were down by 2·5 per cent. compared with the same period last year.

The decline of Scotch and other spirits in the domestic market is associated with an increase in the share taken by wine. Beer's share of the total consumer expenditure has been stable for some time. The consumer of a typical glass measure of Scotch pays nearly double the excise duty of the consumer ordering a glass of wine or half a pint of beer. In that example, all consume the same volume of alcohol. It is no wonder that consumers and customers switch their expenditure away from spirits.

The tax structures of many member states of the European Community have the opposite effect to the structures of the United Kingdom. Of the six EEC states which have wine as their main product, five have no tax at all on their home product, and the sixth, France, imposes a duty which is equivalent to about 1p per litre. All six countries, except Greece with no alcohol duty, impose a duty on spirits, thus benefiting home production against imports. As a result, the present United Kingdom tax structure makes any future moves towards harmonisation or approximation much more difficult for Scotch whisky within the European Community.

I remind my hon. Friend that, for the United Kingdom alone among European Community countries, the spirits industry is of predominant significance. If we get it wrong and adversely affect the Scotch whisky industry, the political consequences for our party in Scotland cannot be overstated. We could be described almost as a unique species in Scotland. I tell people that I am a minority of a minority, being a Scottish Conservative Member of Parliament.

In a letter dated 20 July 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Chief Secretary to the Treasury wrote:

> "The existing duty system allows the Chancellor the opportunity to take account of changes in the economic conditions affecting each of the drinks industries in setting duty rates."

I only wish that the evidence supported that claim.

Wine, which is not a United Kingdom-based industry, is taking an increasing share of the United Kingdom's drinks market. As I said earlier, beer's share is static. Only spirits have experienced both a reduced market share and a decline in the real price of the product. It is not possible for the Exchequer to squeeze more excise duty out of the Scotch whisky industry, as it cannot sustain its present market share while facing competition from other cheaper drinks bearing a much lower rate of duty. I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood to the Front Bench. This shows the interest that Scotch whisky has for Scottish Members—of course, I mean the industry, not the product.

The 1988 family expenditure survey shows that beer and spirits drinkers have a similar income distribution, while wine drinkers are more concentrated in the high-income groups. That is a significant and important fact. I am saying in a roundabout way that those people can afford to pay more. If equity is the objective, taxes should be raised on wine relative to those on spirits and beer.

What are the social considerations? As I said, I am a teetotaller. I have campaigned actively on alcohol-related health problems, drink-driving and anti-social behaviour, including under-age drinking. I believe, as does the Royal College of Psychiatrists, that

> "it is the alcohol content which matters—rather than the unique qualities of a particular drink. The widespread belief —that only spirits drinkers become alcoholics—is quite without foundation."

I understand from a parliamentary answer that, in England and Wales, 90 per cent. of drink-related road accidents are caused by people drinking beer. Social considerations demand that all alcoholic drinks are treated equitably and there can be no justification for discriminating against spirits. After all, if someone is stopped while driving a car and is tested, the police are not interested in what he has been drinking; they are concerned with the alcohol content of the blood. That should be the same measure for taxation.

All the evidence suggests that, for social reasons, all drinks should be taxed at the same rate per degree of alcohol content. It is in the national interest that we should cease discriminating against Scotch whisky. It encourages imports of wine and has an adverse affect on the balance of trade. It encourages emulation by overseas Governments. Indeed, recently in Japan the director-general of the Scotch Whisky Association was invited to explain to the Ministry of Finance why the Japanese Government should not follow the United Kingdom Government's example and discriminate against Scotch whisky.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies recently recommended that all alcoholic drinks should be taxked at the same rate per degree of alcohol content. Therefore, it is not just the Scotch whisky industry. Scotch Whisky Association or me making these comments. The institute calculated—this pleases me no end—that equalising rates of duty per unit of alcohol at the present rate for spirits and the rates for all drinks would raise excise duty by 14 per cent. and that VAT revenue would increase by almost 3 per cent. To anyone who is interested in getting funds into the Government's coffers, that must be a good way of going about it, because it is an indirect tax, of which Conservative Members approve.

Another important benefit of levelling up taxes is that it would reduce wine imports. Using customs and excise drinks equation estimates of elasticity of demand for wine, the Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that wine imports would fall by more than £200 million per annum. That could only be good for the balance of payments.

[Mr. Bill Walker]

Taxing all drinks at the same rate per unit of alcohol content would be administratively easy to operate. It would also improve United Kingdom employment prospects, reduce the distortion of consumer choice and discourage emulation of United Kingdom practices overseas. The time for tax reform is long overdue. There is no conceivable interest that provides any rational basis for continuing discrimination against the Scotch whisky industry.

I have made my contribution by ensuring that the quality and quantity of alcohol in Scotch cannot be diluted. I look now to the Government to take the measures necessary to create an environment and tax regime in which this industry—Scotland's premier exporting industry and one of the United Kingdom's main exporters—will continue to provide massive revenues for the Treasury, huge exports and, from a constituency point of view, continuing employment.

I welcome the opportunity to place on record my views about this important and fundamental industry in Scotland. It would not be overstating the case to say that Scotch is recognised worldwide as unique. It can be obtained from only one country in the world, and it is up to us to protect it.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am reluctant to iterrupt this important debate, but, as you will know, Mr. Speaker has ruled that Members of Parliament may not be denied access to Downing street. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and I had arranged to present a letter setting out the concern of ourselves and others about the rundown state of the health service in London and, in particular, the problems at Great Ormond Street hospital for sick children. We had arranged to be there at 1 o'clock with a number of other people and we were denied access. We eventually discovered that we had been denied access not by the police, who are only doing the job that they have been asked to do, but by the Government's public relations managers, because they are waiting until it is convenient for the Prime Minister to be filmed receiving his Christmas turkey. Since Mr. Speaker has ruled that hon. Members may not be denied access to No. 10 Downing street, I should be grateful if you would take this up with the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I was not aware that Mr. Speaker had so ruled, but I would not dream of questioning what the hon. Gentleman has said. No doubt his point will be drawn to the Prime Minister's attention.

While I am on my feet, I draw the House's attention to the fact that these half-hour Adjournment debates on the occasion of the Christmas Adjournment should be so arranged as to allow the Minister adequate time to reply. I regret that the Minister's time to reply to the debate has been curtailed.

1.22 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on initiating this debate on Scotch whisky at an appropriate and festive time of year. I congratulate him on being such an excellent advocate for a product that he does not even enjoy. I am in the same position as my hon. Friend, but, like him, I can appreciate that it is a fine, high-quality product of which we should all be proud.

Obviously, the Government fully recognise the valuable contribution made by the Scotch whisky industry to exports. The industry is to be congratulated on its magnificent achievement of exporting 85 per cent. of its total production, resulting in about £1·5 billion of income. It has emerged from the difficult years of the mid-1980s strengthened and invigorated largely, although not entirely—there has been Government help—by its own effort in marketing and targeting. I am delighted to note that some distilleries that had been mothballed for some years have successfully reopened.

The burden of my hon. Friend's debate has been the question of taxation of whisky but, in passing, I should like to mention some ways in which the Government should helped the Scotch whisky industry over the past 10 years.

It is fair to say that the duty ratio in relation to alcohol content between spirits and beer and wine has fallen from 2·8:1 to 1·7:1 and the tax on a normal bottle of whisky has fallen from some 80 per cent. of the retail price in 1980 to 66 per cent. today. Taking inflation into account during the period May 1979 to April 1990, the duty on spirits has fallen by some 27 per cent. in real terms, while that on beer has risen by 19 per cent. I understand my hon. Friend's concern about the interaction between the duty on wine and beer on the one hand and spirits on the other. I hope that he will accept that such movement as there has been has been positive and in favour of whisky.

My hon. Friend was right to mention his successful private Member's Bill, which is now the Scotch Whisky Act 1988. It enshrines the traditional method of producing Scotch whisky and its maturation in oak casks. He will accept that the Government took the lead in Brussels on the European Community spirits drinks regulations, which came into force last December and ensures that the name and quality of Scotch whisky is protected throughout the Community. The regulation defines the minimum alcoholic strength as 40 per cent. alcohol by volume and ensures that only whisky distilled in Scotland can use the name Scotch whisky.

The Government were instrumental in opening up the Japanese market and reducing the discriminatory duties against Scotch whisky there. We are continuing efforts to remove restrictions on imports of Scotch to Korea and Taiwan. Both markets have great potential. We are fully aware of the general concern to liberalise the Taiwan market for imported spirits and we give support wherever possible. We shall continue to co-operate with the Scotch Whisky Association in certification procedures to prevent counterfeiting and look-alikes.

My hon. Friend mentioned the 10 per cent. duty increase in the last Budget. I must point out that it was the first duty increase on spirits since 1985, in contrast to beer, wine and cider, the duty on which was increased in 1988. The duty on spirits in real terms has fallen by 27 per cent. in the past 10 years. I feel constrained to mention cider because I have Gaymers in my constituency and I want to go home safely at the end of the debate.

The burden of my hon. Friend's argument has been the question of unitary taxation. He argued that all alcoholic drinks should be taxed strictly according to their alcohol

content. I have paid careful attention to his views. As he rightly says, we must not lose sight of the fact that the basic purpose of alcoholic drinks duties—sometimes it is overlooked, but not by my hon. Friend—is to raise revenue for the Government. In the past financial year, those duties brought in nearly £4·5 billion. To achieve that, successive Governments have set out to collect revenue from various drinks rather than from alcohol as such.

I was amused when my hon. Friend quoted our right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I am obliged to tell my hon. Friend that the present flexible structure allows my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take market and industrial factors into account. For example, sparkling wine, which is often regarded as a luxury product, has traditionally been taxed at a higher rate than still wine of the same alcoholic strength. Similarly, cider, which is of the same strength or stronger than average beer, is taxed at a lower rate. To link duties on the basis of alcoholic strength would limit the Chancellor's room for manoeuvre and produce a major upheaval in the market place.

I note that my hon. Friend suggests that time should be taken to look at this and that if such changes were considered they could be phased in over some years. I can assure him that those questions will be considered most carefully by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in the run-up to next year's Budget. My hon. Friend will not expect me to give any more undertakings now.

My hon. Friend mentioned the European Community. The Government's attitude to centrally imposed tax harmonisation is well known. Such harmonisation as is necessary should come about as a result of the operation of market forces. We have consistently said that member states should be free to set their own rates of duty, in the light of their own fiscal, social and other policies. I believe that my hon. Friend agrees, because part of his argument is that the Government should take into account the interests of the Scotch whisky industry in setting its own duty policies. His comments about the European Community will be taken into account when discussions get under way.

I assure my hon. Friend that I listened most carefully to his remarks, which were preceded by my meeting with the Scotch Whisky Association. Clearly that industry is vital to Scotland, and I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will ensure that, just as we have protected its interests in the past, we shall do so in future.

A77 and M77, Ayrshire

1.30 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the House, and perhaps I should explain that my elevation to the Opposition Dispatch Box was self-appointed. It is not the first time that that has happened. I took a leaf out of the book of Mr. Deputy Speaker, my right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Mr. Walker), who did the same thing in 1971—and look how he got on.

Perhaps I may first comment that the debate we have just had on the Scotch whisky industry was important for the whole of Scotland. I value greatly the work of the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in respect of that industry, because I have a big constituency interest in it—and I enjoy a dram.

This debate concerns the Ayr road route to the A77 and M77 link, and the decline that will occur in Ayrshire's economy if that project is not put back on schedule and started at the proper time in 1991. I shall summarise the economic issues associated with the A77 extension, concentrating on four main areas. They are the regional perspective, the Ayrshire perspective, the reasons for the 30-month delay in commencing that project and the risk of further slippage if the road building programme is in any way delayed.

The regional perspective and the economic arguments for immediate commencement of the Ayr route are multifactorial, but it is possible to isolate the key and undisputed reason for elevating the Ayr road route to the top of both the Strathclyde regional council and Scottish Development Council road building programmes. There is no doubt that the scheme offers the highest rate of return of all the strategic road schemes in the trunk road programme.

In the cost-benefit analysis undertaken by the Scottish Development Department, the Ayr route recorded a present net value of benefits totalling £236 million on low traffic growth predictions and of £462 million on high traffic growth predictions. A breakdown of the total benefit indicates an evaluation of time savings ranging between £278 million and £500 million, and accident cost savings of between £10·5 million and £14·6 million—to say nothing of the anxiety and distress that can be alleviated by reducing accidents.

The regional economic case was summarised succinctly in the region's application for European regional development funding, which cites the following criteria for progressing the route:

> "The Ayr road route would be a major improvement to the strategic road network within the Strathclyde region. It would provide a bypass through heavily congested routes to the south side of Glasgow, and has a vital role in improving links between Glasgow and Ayrshire. It would provide a new fast route between Glasgow and the Ayrshire towns of Ayr, Prestwick, Irving—via the A71, Kilmarnock, and the external communications links of Prestwick airport and Stranraer. It would reduce excess costs to markets served by Prestwick airport and would offer major benefits to Ayrshire in linking it firmly to the national Scottish road network. Improved access to and egress from Ayrshire would open up the potential for inward investment and would encourage small to medium sized enterprise development by opening up new areas, and should have a positive impact on tourism and leisure development."

Thus, the region has proposed a sound economic case to support the Ayr road route in terms of the cost-benefit

[Mr. William McKelvey]

analysis; improvement of the regional strategic road network; strengthening of transport links of the metropolitan heart; improvement of external communication links; and the widening of economic development opportunities for Ayrshire. Those are all important issues at a time when we hear that the recession, which is now biting in England, is likely to start in Scotland.

From a local, Ayrshire, perspective, the economic arguments can be developed even further by examining the benefits that the extension and upgrading of the Ayr road route will have on the existing industrial and commercial base. The savings in anticipated journey times for industry occasioned by the upgrading and the extension of the A77 have been estimated at between 35 and 47 per cent. in off-peak conditions and between 40 and 53 per cent. during peak conditions.

Clearly, the impact that that will have transportation and distribution costs, lead times, improved freight movement times, local supply sourcing, delivery times and inventories will be considerable. From a human resource perspective, the shorter commuting times will widen the scope for Ayrshire firms to draw from the professional and skilled labour pool offered by the city of Glasgow.

The rapid upgrading and extension of the Ayr route is critical to remove the current relative remoteness of Ayrshire from the national motorway network. It will also improve the competitiveness of firms that are already established there.

In recent years, much has been made of the opportunities that are to be derived from the removal of trade barriers in Europe. We are constantly reminded by the Government and asked whether we are ready for the opportunities of 1992, when those barriers are removed. Unless Ayrshire benefits from an increase in infrastructural investment, we shall be on the periphery—or even beyond—of European markets. Already there is a perceived danger that the peripheralisation associated with the future of the rail network, and an anticipation that the east coast mainline will become the preferred rail route south to London, and to continental Europe for freight services, will be intensified if strategic planning and implementation of an improved road infrastructure is not adhered to, on time, in Ayrshire. We have a right to demand that that scenario is avoided at all costs.

I know that the Minister is familiar with the arguments presented thus far, and I should like to consider the reasons why we now face a further delay of 30 months in the programming of a road, which was originally proposed in 1965, and was probably started by the Romans, if they got to that area.

Both the regional council and the Scottish Office accept and indeed promote the economic justification for the scheme and both have professed a commitment to it. Why, then, is there a 30-month delay? Two weeks ago the new Secretary of State for Scotland announced a £9 million cut in spending on Scotland's roads and transport programme for 1991-92. Clearly, that will substantiate the region's claim that the delay has been occasioned entirely by inadequate total capital allocations.

However, it is on the issue of allocation of resources between competing schemes that the region's commitment to the progression of the Ayr road must be questioned closely. Indeed, in transportation policy and programming procedures, the region set a precedent during the 1990-95 cycle by proposing a capital programme comprising its base programme, and a new departure—to add a supplementary programme of expenditure which consisted of additional expenditure identified by the director of roads, over and above that contained in the 1990-95 financial plan.

The director of roads' view is that this expenditure has a higher priority than some schemes contained in the base programme—and evidently the Ayr road route. The rationale for affording the supplementary programme greater priority than named schemes within the base programme has to be questioned closely. In case the Minister is unfamiliar with the supplementary expenditure programme, it is categorised as follows:

"M8 Pavement Reconstruction Renfrew/Baillieston
M8 Upgrading of Capacity
(a) Drumbeck Connection Improvement
(b) Charing Cross-East of Townhead
Bridge Assessment/Strengthening Replacement, Bridge Refurbishment, Car Park Refurbishment, Town Centre Programme, Public Transport Development Study.

That is the priority given by Strathclyde region to its programme. We shall have to go there and question its representatives very closely. To be fair, I do not think that it gave adequate or, indeed, any consideration to the problems that would face Ayrshire once the priorities were changed.

The prioritisation of expenditure, as well as the capital allocation aspect, has led to the delay in the extension of the upgrading of the A77. A report by the region's chief executive, entitled "Transport Strategy and Capital Programme Review", dated August 1989, has warned:

"Although the TPP Sub-Committee has yet to consider these supplementary bids in detail, it is clear at this stage that if the Council's capital allocations are not increased substantially, then it will be necessary to delay and/or delete a number of named schemes included in the . . . Programme".

The consequential delay for Ayrshire goes further than the A77. In addition to that delay, the A71 improvement at East Holmes has been delayed by 24 months; the Dalry bypass on the A737 has been delayed by 23 months; Doon Bridge, Dalmellington B741 has been delayed by 12 months; the Irvine south approach road bridge has been delayed by 24 months; the Newmilns relief road A71 has been delayed by 24 months; and the Dalry realignment has been delayed by eight months.

Let us compare the cost of the supplementary programme—£73 million—with the total cost of the Ayr road route, which is some £55 million. The region's claim that the delay is a direct consequence of inadequate capital allocations from central Government becomes somewhat less convincing in the light of those figures. Nevertheless, it has a case. The Secretary of State for Scotland has announced a £9 million cut in the road programme for 1991-92; two days before, the former Secretary of State —now Secretary of State for Transport—was able to announce £1 billion additional expenditure on the M25, which is more than we have spent on our roads in Scotland for a decade.

Let us address the question why the director of roads in Strathclyde region has prioritised the supplementary expenditure programme—a prioritisation that was subsequently ratified by the transportation TPP sub-committee, full committee and full council by acceptance of proposed minimum and priority programmes. According to the evaluation, capacity enhancement, repairs to the M8 through Glasgow and, indeed, work on

the bridge refurbishment and assessment have a greater call on available resources than the Ayr road route and other schemes that are now subject to delay. Obviously, we all consider the work to be done on the bridge essential. We should be finding a way of obtaining additional money, either from the Chancellor of the Exchequer or from Europe.

Although we in Ayrshire accept that there will always be interests competing for capital allocations, we cannot afford to accept that, merely for that reason, the Ayr road route—the largest single scheme in the capital programme, which was as yet uncommitted—should be targeted for a further 30-month delay. The introduction of a supplementary programme, described in the document as

"containing those elements of expenditure felt to be necessary but which cannot all be accommodated within present indications of available resources",

and the elevation of that programme to the detriment of the Ayr road route, merit further explanation from the region. It will be pressed for that information.

On 9 December, Kilmarnock and Loudoun district council organised a meeting of all Ayrshire district authorities plus the district of Eastwood. Eastwood has a very strong claim for the upgrading of the road, because of the environmental difficulties that it creates with heavy traffic. For Ayrshire authorities to agree on anything is unique, but for the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), other Members of Parliament, councillors and representatives of trade and industry to be of one mind underlines the importance of Ayrshire's unanimity. We agreed that the civic heads of all the authorities should meet Charlie Grey and Malcolm Waugh to press our case for reconsideration of the matter by Strathclyde regional council.

The British Road Federation kindly wrote to me and said that it was delighted to note that this debate was to be held. Richard Diment, the deputy director, commissioned a report from Transport Action Scotland. I have here the brief prepared by Maureen Orde. Another excellent brief was prepared for me by Miss Jacqueline Cullen, the economic development officer of Kilmarnock. I congratulate her on its contents.

Transport Action Scotland represents all types of road users, including freight-carrying organisations. It has been worried for a long time about the shortcomings of the road system serving Ayrshire. The A77 and the A78 are the most important trunk routes. They link the area to Glasgow and the north. The A76/A75 forms the main trunk route south from Ayrshire to the A74/M74. It is particularly concerned about the delay in implementing the A77 road route, despite the Secretary of State's approval for the scheme, following the public inquiry in 1988.

The existing A77 on the south side of Glasgow is completely inadequate for the huge amount of traffic that it is forced to carry. The problems are exacerbated when drivers reach those sections of the road that are nearest the city centre. Traffic volumes range from 15,500 vehicles a day south of Newton Mearns to as many as 27,500 vehicles a day on the section south of Nether Auldhouse road, which gives access to the M77 at Dumbreck junction. That colossal volume of traffic has to go through the constituency of the hon. Member for Eastwood before it reaches the motorway. The effect on the environment is completely unacceptable.

I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Eastwood is nodding. I am grateful for his support, although I realise that his ministerial responsibilities prevent him from speaking today. I have been grateful for his support in the past. I shall hope that I continue to have his support—if not from the Dispatch Box, perhaps spiritually.

The road network in Ayrshire is of the utmost importance. Strathclyde regional council advised us to meet the Minister and ask him for more money. I am sure that the Minister realises that early in the new year we shall apply to him for more money. I hope that he will provide us with the opportunity to press the case further if, by now, he has not fully understood the importance of the Ayrshire road route to the economy of the west of Scotland.

1.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) on his elevation to the Opposition Front Bench for this important debate and on the able and persuasive way in which he has presented the case on behalf of Kilmarnock and Loudoun.

I fully agree with the hon. Member that the improvement of road links between Glasgow and south-west Scotland should have high priority. At present, traffic between Glasgow and Kilmarnock encounters a bottleneck between the M8 and the start of the four-lane A77 at Newton Mearns. I am well aware, from the representations that have been made to me by the hon. Member and by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and from visiting both Kilmarnock and Eastwood, of the delays that can occur. I fully appreciate the costs of these delays.

It may be helpful if I consider first the strategic significance of the Ayr road route scheme—that is, the link proposed between the end of the M77 spur at Dumbreck, off the M8 in Glasgow—the north end of the proposed road—and the A77 at Malletsheugh south of Newton Mearns.

The major emphasis of the Scottish Office's trunk road programme is to improve the key inter-urban roads in Scotland. Our priorities are to complete the central Scotland motorway network and to press ahead with the upgrading of the A74 to motorway. Funding for trunk roads has been increased substantially to meet those objectives. Two years ago, we spent £90 million on new trunk road construction. This year, we have allocated £130 million. The overall total is £200 million, but, as the hon. Gentleman pointed out, a considerable portion must be spent on road safety, on strengthening bridges and on similar activities. The results of that increase in expenditure are clear. Two years ago, we had no motorway schemes in progress. Next year, we shall have six major schemes under construction, all in the central belt of Scotland.

A key to our progress has been our partnership with Strathclyde regional council. It is vital that the trunk and key principal road network in and around Glasgow is upgraded coherently. The jointly funded M80 Stepps bypass is now under construction. Tenders have been invited for a design-and-construct contract for the jointly funded M8 St. James interchange. We have jointly promoted the Ayr road route through a public local inquiry.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I am pleased to repeat to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun that the emphasis that we place on the completion of the central Scotland motorway network includes high priority for the construction of the Ayr road route. This will provide an important strategic link in the network. Indeed, when complete, there will be continuous motorway, dual-carriageway and single four-lane carriageway link to Ayr from Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood will be interested in the two longer-term improvements that are planned for the trunk road south of Malletsheugh. These will upgrade the remaining four-lane single-carriageway section of the road to dual carriageway. The necessary design work and statutory procedures for the schemes are being progressed by Strathclyde regional council, which is acting as our agents for the project. Our programme is to complete the preparatory work for the section between Fenwick and the B764 Eaglesham road during 1992. The remaining length from the B764 to Malletsheugh is expected to be ready during the following year. Thereafter, start dates will be decided on the basis of the available resources and priorities at the time. Final decisions on starts are taken annually each March for the year ahead.

We recognise the importance of all these schemes. In considering allocations to Strathclyde regional council, therefore, and in drawing up the trunk road programme, we have given high priority to the funding necessary to construct the new Ayr road route.

The new road from Dumbreck to Malletsheugh comes in two sections. First, within the Glasgow city boundary —from the end of the M77 to Darnley—the new road would be a local road constructed by Strathclyde regional council. Outside the city boundary, from Darnley southwards to Malletsheugh, the new link would be a trunk road. However, the two sections of the road have to be co-ordinated. It would make no sense for one section of the road to end in the middle of a field at Darnley, without the other to meet it.

Within Glasgow, and on the outskirts of the city, the A77 is mainly single carriageway. It carries large volumes of local, long-distance and commuter traffic. I am aware that current volumes of traffic in south-west Glasgow cause extensive congestion for considerable periods of the day. The new road will provide substantial benefits to through traffic by reducing delays, will benefit local traffic by easing congestion and will improve road safety by reducing road-user conflicts. The scheme benefits are sufficient to provide, as the hon. Gentleman rightly suggested, a high economic return on investment.

The Scottish Office has said that it will be prepared to proceed with the trunk road section when Strathclyde regional council constructs the new local road. Indeed, as the greater part of the route is Strathclyde's, we cannot move on the trunk road portion until it has let contracts. The key, therefore, to whether the new route proceeds is its willingness to devote resources to its part of the new link.

With that point in mind, in our capital allocations to Strathclyde regional council for 1990-91, we added £5·2 million to the provisional figure previously notified. Strathclyde's allocation was therefore increased to £73·6 million. That increase included £2·7 million on the assumption, which was notified to the council, that work on the Ayr road route would begin. At that time, Strathclyde's financial plan showed that only £28·6 million of its planned expenditure was legally committed. The regional council therefore had considerable flexibility, with the balance, £45 million, being available to accommodate the rest of its programme, including the Ayr road route.

However, when we make allocations to local roads authorities, taking into account the priorities that those authorities have stated in their transport policies and programmes, documents and plans, we do not give projects specific consent. In other words, the authority can, within the allocation announced, use its spending consents as it sees fit.

The reasoning behind that approach is clear. It is for regional authorities to determine their relative priorities for investment in their area. We believe that it is for them to judge the most pressing local priorities. If one likes, that is local democracy at work.

Phase 1A of the Ayr road route from Dumbreck road to Barrhead road was programmed to start in March 1991. Phase 1B from Barrhead road to the city boundary was programmed to start in March 1992. Both parts—a total of 5·5 km—were due to finish in 1994. At its meeting on 23 October 1990, Strathclyde region's transport policies and programmes sub-committee considered options for delaying the work by 18, 30 or 42 months. It decided to recommend that work on the Ayr road route should be delayed by 30 months. That decision was confirmed by the full roads and transportation committee on 1 November 1990. The decision stems from a programme review carried out by Strathclyde roads department. The council decided that, to take account of what it saw as the wider needs of the region, it was necessary to delay the start of the Ayr road route.

Whether we like it or not, if we add together the roads and transport programmes which all Scottish authorities would like to undertake, the total requirement for capital consent in any one year would substantially exceed the amounts that can be made available. However, Strathclyde's allocation for roads and transport for 1990-91 is 45 per cent. of the Scottish total. It is the highest allocation per local road length of all mainland authorities. It is £5,600 per local road kilometre, compared with the national average of £3,200. Also, although Strathclyde has a high population density, its level of expenditure per head of population is equal to the national average and is substantially higher than for other central belt authorities.

I accept that Strathclyde has to make choices within the resources allocated to it, but I believe that we have treated Strathclyde generously. A start should, therefore, be possible on the Ayr road route if the council deploys the funds available on schemes that were at the centre of the emphasis that the council made in preparing its bid to the Scottish Office.

I shall not respond in detail to what the hon. Gentleman said about the advantages of the route for inward investment because those advantages are self-evident. There is no doubt that that view is shared by Locate in Scotland and by the Scottish Development Agency.

Strathclyde's decision to delay the Ayr road route works is most unfortunate. To return to road funding, decisions on final allocations for 1991-92 will not be taken until about February. But it is possible, given the council's decisions this year, that the relatively favourable treatment

that we have given Strathclyde on capital allocations will have to be reappraised. A reappraisal will be needed if the council is deploying funds on schemes which were not central to the priorities put to us. Those comments do not necessarily imply that there will be a reduction in Strathclyde's allocation next year. We shall examine carefully the council's latest financial plan and its reviewed priorities, including its other major schemes. We shall then determine final allocations for next and future years within the overall amounts available for Scotland.

The hon. Gentleman was absolutely right to emphasise the importance of the road for jobs. As he knows, the SDA identified the Bringan site at Kilmarnock as a potential high-amenity site which could be marketed on a time scale to fit with the roads improvement programme. I urge that the region take that fact fully into account.

Road safety is also relevant. We attach the highest importance to that and I must point out that the accident rate on the A77 between Glasgow and Ayr is not exceptionally high by comparison with that on other similar roads. However, we aim to reduce accidents on all roads by one third by the year 2000. We are aware that the number of fatal and of serious accidents on the A77 is a cause for serious concern, so the construction of the Ayr road route would be a major step forward in improving road safety on that important route.

I repeat the advice that I have given to the hon. Gentleman on our previous meetings. He and his constituents should address their representations to Strathclyde regional council as the key decision on when the Ayr road route proceeds is the council's. We are very disappointed that the council has decided not to begin the strategic work now. However, we believe that the council could start work on the northern part of the new road in 1991-92. We should warmly welcome a decision on those lines by the council.

Vietnamese Children (Hong Kong)

2 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise once again at Christmas time the subject of the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. In December 1989, we had a full debate on the boat people in which I was able to take part. In December 1988 and in December 1987, I was able to raise the issue in the regular pre-Christmas debate. Sadly, the problem still troubles our conscience at this time of year. I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friends the Members for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who know the problem well.

At Christmas time, we should be especially conscious of those for whom there is, metaphorically, no room at the inn. We should also be especially concerned about young children in need of care and comfort. Sadly, however, this season will once again be a bleak time for the many thousands of young children locked up in the detention camps of Hong Kong, for which we in the House are ultimately responsible.

Over Christmas, many thousands of young Vietnamese children will catch a glimpse of the outside world only through thick coils of barbed wire. They will play as best they can on crowded cement yards in which they have spent every day of the past year. Some children in the camps are lucky if they can walk on grass or touch a flower on one day in the whole year. Their regular home will be shacks 50 m long by 9 m wide, shared by 300 adults and children.

The minimum guidelines set by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees state that every adult or child should have living space of at least 3·5 sq m. At the Whitehead and High Island detention centres, which hold almost 30,000 boat people, the living space is about 1 sq yd per person. That means that three families will live on top of each other in tiered bunks. It means that home for a husband, a wife and two children will be a strip of plywood measuring 8 ft by 6 ft, with one family living 3 ft above their heads and another family living 3 ft below them. I am ashamed that we should make families live in such conditions.

We require men, women and children to live in such conditions as a by-product of a policy which has been tacitly approved by the House whereby we seek to stop a flood of people desperately seeking a haven from political and economic repression. We know, and the people of Hong Kong know, that a quarter of the 60 million inhabitants of Vietnam would emigrate if they could. Indeed, more than a million have left Vietnam in the past 12 years, and 800,000 have found new homes in the United States. To stop that vast potential flow of people trying to escape from political repression and abject poverty, we had to erect effective and unpleasant barriers.

There are two prongs to such a policy. On the one hand, we say that all new arrivals in Hong Kong from Vietnam must face a fair, but rigorous, screening process to establish whether they are genuine political refugees rather than economic migrants. We also make conditions tough for those who have been screened out and denied refugee status, as well as tough for those waiting to be screened. Our policy of being deliberately unpleasant to those fleeing

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

from Vietnam reached an unhappy climax earlier this year when a planeload of protesting boat people were forcibly deported to Vietnam.

I acknowledge that the policy has had its successes. The flow of boat people from north Vietnam has dropped dramatically since that single act of forced repatriation. Perhaps that reduction was caused by news of the repatriation. However, the fall has been so steep—from 2,000 boat people per month from north Vietnam to 100 per month—that it seems more probable that the drop is the result of a change of policy by the Vietnamese and mainland Chinese Governments.

The Foreign Office has reached an agreement with the Vietnamese authorities which provides for easier repatriation of those boat people who do not protest too much. In some ways, that is a typical Foreign Office agreement, in that it reassures Vietnamese symathisers like me that there will not be forced repatriation, while it encourages anti-Vietnamese politicians in Hong Kong to believe that there will be.

At the same time, the policy of making conditions intolerably uncomfortable is supposed to persuade people who have been screened out and denied refugee status to return to Vietnam voluntarily. In the first nine months of this year, 3,500 people returned voluntarily. That is a far higher figure than I had expected 12 months ago. The authorities in Hong Kong, and Foreign Office Ministers, will claim that the policy is working, that the number of refugees from north Vietnam has been cut dramatically and that the number of boat people returning voluntarily to Vietnam is higher than we had reason to believe.

However, that policy is based on the hope that economic and political conditions in Vietnam will improve and that the repressive nature of the Vietnamese communist Government will be relaxed still further. Unfortunately, in recent weeks Vietnam seems to have been going backwards rather than of forwards. A year ago, inflation in Vietnam seemed to be under control and the Government there appeared to be adopting a more liberal attitude politically and economically.

In the summer of 1989, I met the Vietnamese Foreign Minister, a veteran hard-line communist, who at that time sounded like a member of the "No Turning Back" group with his buoyant enthusiasm for market forces as a cure for inflation. That seemed to be working, but inflation is, alas, now rising sharply once more and the economic liberals have given way to communist hard-liners. Other conditions are also deteriorating. Soviet aid has disappeared. Fertilisers are in short supply in Vietnam. Oil prices are rocketing and unemployment is growing. The foreign currency earnings of Vietnamese guest workers in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have disappeared.

At the same time, political repression, especially in the more relaxed south, seems to be intensifying. I note that, although the number of boat people coming from North Vietnam has fallen dramatically in the past few months, the number from south Vietnam has trebled in the same period. Many of the thousands of south Vietnamese boat people now arriving—most are ethnic Chinese—are confident that they will be given refugee status. Postal communications between Vietnam and the detention camps in Hong Kong are surprisingly good. It seems wholly unlikely that many detainees will agree to go back in the face of genuine fear of famine and hunger. I also fear that the economic and political repression in Vietnam could lead to a fresh wave of desperate people taking to their boats. If that happens, the British Government must be prepared to step in directly.

The finances of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Hong Kong are in a mess. When I was last there a few weeks ago, UNHCR owed the Hong Kong Administration more than 100 million Hong Kong dollars, but sadly some countries specifically exclude Hong Kong from their UNHCR contributions on the grounds that Hong Kong is rich. The politicians in Hong Kong, some of whom will be facing elections soon, are all too likely to want to cut the amount of money spent on the boat people. If there is a new exodus, the British Government have an obligation to step in with fresh help.

So, what can be done? I shall comment on three areas —screening, accommodation and education. First, there has been some improvement since I referred to the screening process last year. Of course, it is not perfect and there have been bad cases, such as the 111 boat people who were recently freed on a writ of habeas corpus and who have now been given refugee status. Clearly, they should never have been treated as they were. That episode has had a happy ending, however, and I am satisfied that the bulk of the boat people have received a far more thorough screening than most would-be refugees seeking asylum in other countries.

However, I am not at all happy about the screening of the unaccompanied children in the camps. Depending how one defines the words "unaccompanied" and "children", there are between 2,000 and 4,000 unaccompanied children in the Hong Kong camps. I am sure that their screening is carried out humanely, but it takes an extraordinarily long time. There is the bureaucracy of the Hong Kong Administration, meshing with the bureaucracy of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. One then has to deal with the even more inefficient bureaucrats in Vietnam.

If the present rate is maintained, unaccompanied children may languish for years in the overcrowded detention camps. When I was last in Hong Kong, about 40 unaccompanied children were dealt with per month. That cannot be sensible of humane. I ask the Minister to look again at the special screening arrangements for those children. In view of the deteriorating situation in Vietnam, I hope that far more can be resettled in the West.

Secondly, I hope that all the unaccompanied children, and many of the families, can be moved from closed detention camps to open centres where they are not kept in prison-like conditions. When I was in Hong Kong this autumn, I was impressed by the Pillar Point open centre, which is run by the non-profit-making firm, Hong Kong Housing Services for Refugees Ltd. Pillar point now houses 5,000 people who have been given refugee status. All those refugees will be rehoused in the west sooner or later. Many have jobs in the still-thriving Hong Kong economy. Rent is charged at 100 Hong Kong dollars per month per room. Accommodation is sparse but adequate. In place of the scores of wardens with jangling keys, who are an inevitable part of the scene at High Island and Whitehead closed camps, there is an administrative staff of fewer than 20.

When it comes to looking after refugees, privatisation works. I am glad that there are plans for that non-profit-making private company to run the new Tai A

Chau detention centre being built on the Soko islands. That should give hundreds, if not thousands, of children the opportunity to lead a more normal life. I hope that the Chi Ma Wan closed centre—also on an isolated island many miles from the city—can also be privatised and opened up.

I accept, with reluctance, the necessity for some closed camps, where conditions are austere, but as the ominous situation in Vietnam means that only a minority of people will be willing to return in the immediate future, we must take urgent action to ensure that children and young people are treated humanely.

Thirdly, I note that the Vietnamese, like the Chinese, are hungry for educations. I salute the work that the Save the Children Fund and other voluntary bodies are doing to provide playgrounds for the younger children. I note that considerable efforts are being made by the authorities to provide Vietnamese education, with an improved curriculum, for children of school age, but the effort seems to have a patchy impact and I hope that the Hong Kong Administration will feel able to increase the resources spent on the boat people's skills. A little money spent judiciously on educating those children should not be begrudged.

When I visited Pillar Point refugee camp recently, I was depressed to hear that the UNHCR had cut out all adult education, particularly the teaching of English. We know that the thousands of adults and children there will eventually be resettled in the west, almost certainly in English-speaking countries. It seems folly, therefore, not to make an effort to teach those people English while they are waiting for resettlement. I have appealed through the American press to Vietnamese organisations in America to fund that work, but ultimately the responsibility for this and for life in all the camps rests with us.

The people who run these camps on our behalf are generally kind and humane, but as Christmas approaches we should not tolerantly accept a system which leaves a child, or a man or woman, with 1 sq yd of living space. Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development announced an extra £5 million for famine relief in Ethiopia and the Sudan, and I welcome that. I accept that the British taxpayer cannot meet all demands, but we have a particular responsibility to help those whom we have deliberately locked up.

2.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) for once again raising the important issue of the plight of Vietnamese children in the boat people's camps in Hong Kong. I know that the House will be pleased to welcome my hon. Friends the Members for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who have taken a great interest in this subject.

The debate provides an opportunity to review recent developments in our efforts to find a humane and lasting solution to the problems posed for Hong Kong by the large numbers of boat people there and by those who still continue to arrive—although, as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham said, fortunately in rather reduced numbers—for it is only through a lasting solution that a stable future for the children in those camps can be secured.

I pay tribute to the Hong Kong authorities, who, despite preoccupations with their own future during a time of considerable uncertainty, have continue to provide a safe haven for the Vietnamese asylum seekers. As we have been able to say for over 11 years now, no Vietnamese has ever been turned away. Hong Kong's humanitarian record is one of which to be proud, but I remind the House that last year Hong Kong coped with the arrival of more than 34,000 people, in addition to the 18,000 who arrived in the previous year.

The cornerstone of our concern is that genuine refugees should continue to enjoy protection and that a new home for them should be found in the west. The corollary is that those who are not refugees should return to their country of origin either to rebuild their lives in their home cities or villages or, if they are intent on leaving, to migrate through normal emigration channels. It is against that background that the policy for dealing with the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong and south-east Asia has evolved.

Screening was introduced in Hong Kong in 1988 with the co-operation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham has been good enough to say that it is a thorough process. The procedures in Hong Kong have undergone some changes over the past 30 months, and I am confident that they are fair and well adapted to their main objective, which is to ensure that no one facing the prospect of return to Vietnam need fear persecution at the hands of the Vietnamese authorities.

Screening selects those whose fear of persecution in Vietnam is well founded. My hon. Friend referred to the agreement that the Foreign Office has concluded with Vietnam, and we have sought to obtain from the Vietnamese authorities specific undertakings that nobody who returns will be punished for having left. I am happy to say that the Vietnamese have honoured that. More than 6,000 people have returned to Vietnam from Hong Kong since March 1989, and their conditions have been monitored by the UNHCR and the British embassy. Not a single incident of persecution or mistreatment of those who have returned has yet been recorded.

Nevertheless, one can understand the argument that it would be hard-hearted to send people back to Vietnam without offering them any help to rebuild their lives. Our policy is far from hard-hearted, for the following reasons. The UNHCR has been providing reintegration assistance to which we have contributed. In addition, last May we announced a contribution of £1 million of aid for the areas of Vietnam from which the boat people originate. Perhaps most significantly, at our instigation, the European Community proposed in July to set up a major repatriation and reintegration assistance programme for returning Vietnamese. My hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham may have seen an announcement in the press stating that that is starting with a pilot project of some 10 million ecu.

Therefore, returning Vietnamese can now enjoy the prospect of generous financial support and a real opportunity to build their own future. There is no prospect that the international community will change its mind and resettle Vietnamese who are not refugees. Yet, sadly, pamphlets, some of which have originated in the United States of America, have circulated in the camps urging people to hang on in the expectation of change.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): The basis of the economy in Vietnam could be changed if we and the United States recognised Vietnam and normalised relations. In that way, the many people who want to reinvest in Vietnam and its economy could do so, and the future of the Vietnamese people would be secure in their own country rather than their having to leave. That would be more helpful than the policy that my hon. Friend the Minister has just described.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, and certainly it will be considered. However, it is going wide of the debate.

The pamphlets are appallingly irresponsible. They prolong to no purpose the detention of men, women and children at a time when the wherewithal exists for them to start a new life back in the communities which they left.

In the few minutes left to me, I should like to comment on the main subjects of the debate. If the ultimately hopeless period of waiting in the camps in Hong Kong is hard on adults, it is even harder on children. There are some 16,500 children under the age of 16 in Hong Kong, and special provision is made for them. They have special dietary scales and are provided with supplementary feeding to ensure that they are well nourished. Medical services, including the same free immunisation service for all babies and children as is provided for all Hong Kong children, are available in every centre. Any child requiring specialist treatment or hospitalisation is sent to outside hospitals, and arrangements are made for the parents to visit regularly.

During the 1989 influx many of the facilities provided for children had to make way for basic accommodation. However, as a result of the improvements this year, conditions are now much better. Education programmes include pre-school, primary and secondary levels. There is a library in each centre and access to educational videos is available to all. My hon. Friend commented on education for these children. Curricula taught in the detention centres are modelled on curricula taught in Vietnam. If more resources could be found, the quality of education would be improved, and we shall give some thought to that. English is taught in the camps to refugees to help them prepare for resettlement and to non-refugees. For the latter, the emphasis must be on Vietnamese because they will be returning to Vietnam.

The camp environment is far from ideal for children. There are play areas and open spaces with play equipment where possible. Donations of toys and gifts, especially at Christmas time, are distributed. Recreational programmes, including outings and excursions, are organised in co-operation with voluntary agencies.

My hon. Friend spoke of the Tai A Chau and the Chi Ma Wan camps. We believe that children are best cared for by responsible adults—their parents, adult relatives or temporary foster parents. Children inevitably tend to be spread throughout the camps. Tai A Chau is to be used as a camp for southerners. Consistent with that policy, the Hong Kong authorities intend to move as many children and unaccompanied minors as possible to Tai A Chau when the camp opens early next year. I am happy to say that the arrangements at Chi Ma Wan are being reviewed. We shall consider including families in that camp.

My hon. Friend was particularly concerned about unaccompanied children, of whom there are estimated to be 2,000 or more. Special committees responsible for them must be created in each country of first asylum. The committee in Hong Kong has operated since 19 April. It is charged with making a recommendation to the Hong Kong Government. So far, 663 cases have been submitted to the committee, which has reached a decision on 116 of them. Of those, 78 have been recommended for repatriation and 38 for resettlement.

My hon. Friend expressed concern at the committee's slow rate of progress. We and the Hong Kong Government share that concern and have urged the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' office in Hong Kong to speed up the committee's work.

Hong Kong has some 12,000 people who have been determined not to be refugees. They are no different from any other illegal immigrants—except that, inevitably because of the emotive history of the boat people and the Vietnam war, their deportation is a matter of contention. It is not fair to expect Hong Kong to continue to provide a temporary resting place. Nor is it fair to the people themselves to continue to hold out a false hope of resettlement.

We, the Hong Kong authorities, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will continue to work closely to achieve the orderly return of those people as soon as possible. I am confident that we have the basis of a durable and humane solution to this long-running problem. We will continue in our unflagging efforts to make it work.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may be aware that all right hon. and hon. Members received today a letter from the Secretary of State for Health about my private Member's Bill on no-fault compensation in the national health service. His letter refers to provisions in the Bill, which is not yet published and was only deposited with the Public Bill Office less than one hour ago. Is not it a grave contempt of the House for a Minister publicly to oppose a Bill in that way, before it has even been published?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): As I understand the hon. Lady, she is suggesting that contempt or a breach of privilege is involved. The correct procedure is for the hon. Lady to write to Mr. Speaker. Doubtless she will reflect on that.

National Curriculum (Religious Freedom)

2.30 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): This is the last debate before Christmas and it is very much in the Christmas spirit—in that it is a genuinely altruistic debate. I used to work in the television industry, but am now a full-time politician. The people on whose behalf I have sought this debate are the Brethren, sometimes known as the Exclusive Brethren. They do not watch television and they do not vote, so this can genuinely be described as an altruistic effort on my part—and the same can be said of any other hon. Member who participates.

The Brethren are very concerned about the national curriculum—not so much about its content as about the way that it is being interpreted. The Brethren have doctrinal purity. They believe in the inspiration of the Bible, and therefore no religious instruction is taken outside the Brethren. They do not share meals with non-believers; nor do they watch films or television. They do not use computers either, and heavily restrict their reading material. Some people will find that odd. Most people will regard their behaviour as being outside their own norms of society.

In representing the case of the Brethren in my constituency, it is not for me to decide what are the norms of society, or what those decent, honest, law-abiding people should or should not do—or should or should not want for their children. In the past, I have taken up cases concerning people who are black or Asian—and no doubt I shall do so in future. For example, I was heavily involved with the whole issue of whether Sikh people should be forced to wear hard hats on building sites. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, was partly instrumental in ensuring, very creditably, that they should not be compelled to do so. That was done on the basis that it was not for us to dictate what people should or should not believe in terms of their religion. What was true for them must be true for the Brethren.

The Government's view was put by my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) when she was Minister of State, and was reiterated by my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) when he assumed that office. It is summed up in a letter from my hon. Friend dated 29 August, in which he states:

"the use of television and radio programmes and videos as media for teaching is not a requirement of the National Curriculum . . . DES Circular 3/90, which was issued on 6 March with the National Curriculum Order for technology, made clear our hope that schools would have regard to parents' views in their choice of media for teaching purposes."

That makes it abundantly clear that, with goodwill on both sides, it could and should be possible to reach a reasonable compromise. Regrettably, that has not been the case.

There have been a range of responses. Some schools and local education authorities have been helpful. In Humberside, a school wrote to the parents saying:

"Your children will be allowed to leave the room whenever a video is to be shown, in all subjects and in each year group; you will be informed of a suitable textbook in Science, which you may wish to purchase as an alternative source of information . . . In English, you will be sent a copy of texts which are to be used, so that you may decide upon their suitability. Should you feel they are not acceptable then we will try to provide an alternative".

In the London borough of Barnet, the headmaster of East Barnet school said:

"The parents and pupils concerned"—

the Brethren—

"are admirable people and I sincerely hope that their strongly held religious beliefs can be accommodated within the State schools. I trust that the English traditions of religious tolerance and compromise will eventually prevail.

Article 14 of the Convention of The Rights Of The Child, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20th November 1989: States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents . . . to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child."

In the London borough of Harrow, one of the schools wrote to parents saying:

"Brethren children are excused from these sessions, however with the encouragement of their teachers and parents they invariably back-up their work from other sources . . . - Far from inhibiting the childrens' progress, it enables them to give a different view point in written work and discussion."

Finally, a head teacher from a school in Gloucester said:

"This letter is just to inform you that the school policy will continue to be one of respecting your wishes in this matter, come what may!"

It has not always been as good as that. Some schools and education authorities have been actively hostile. I have here a series of insensitive and high-handed letters. If these children were black or Asian, some of the remarks in these letters could contravene the Race Relations Act 1976. The remarks that I am about to read are, in my judgment, patronising, insulting and high-handed.

In Hampshire, a headmaster said:

"there are areas in which you have no choice in law whilst the pupils are attending a State school. These areas are in connection with Sex Education and Information Technology."

That headmaster is wrong in law.

In Stafford, a chairman of governors wrote:

"Your particular interpretation of the Bible places demands upon the school's resources that cannot be met without a very considerable amount of extra work."

How dare he tell parents what their interpretation of the Bible must, or must not be?

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend note that I have the greatest possible sympathy with the views that are expressed by the Exclusive Brethren? It would be extremely desirable if some of the people who use these intemperate remarks would pay greater attention to the importance of religion and Christianity in our schools. Furthermore, if he looks at the Race Relations Act 1976, I think that he will find that there is a positive prohibition not only of racism, but also of discrimination on religious grounds.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) both for his support and for the interesting point that he has made about the Race Relations Act. I am certain that the Brethren will follow that up.

Indeed, I have received a number of letters from colleagues, including my neighbour the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), expressing their support for what I was doing today and hoping that the Brethren will be allowed to carry on as they are and that their religion will be respected.

I have a letter from the chairman of governors of a school in Stockport:

"We regret the necessity of this action as we accept that your request was made with the best of intentions".

[Mr. Hughes]

That is the letter that I described as patronising. A Suffolk headmaster said:

"there is no point in discussing these matters further and therefore I am not prepared to make another appointment."

The appointment was with representatives of the Brethren. That was on 2 February, a full month before the Government's circular was issued. The school would not even consult before the Government's view was clear.

The final letter from which I wish to quote comes, regrettably, from my own constituency. I am sorry to say that it is from the chairman of the governors at Longfield school. It is a very good school, but the governors will have to think again. Dr. Welch, the chairman, said:

"the Governors give notice that, as from the first day of the new school year in September 1991, no pupil may be excluded from any lesson, or part of a lesson, or any procedure used by the teaching staff to deliver the curriculum . . . From September 1991, if pupils exclude themselves from any part of the secular curriculum, for reasons other than those listed, the matter will be dealt with using the agreed disciplinary procedures".

I find that entirely unacceptable. It is plain that the good will and reasonableness that my hon. Friend the Minister of State and his predecessor hoped would prevail have not done so in all circumstances. We must see what can be done to help the people concerned. If necessary, they will refer the matter to the European Court of Human Rights—and they have every reason to do so. Article 2 of the European convention on human rights states:

"No person shall be denied the right to education . . .The State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious . . . convictions."

Nothing could be clearer than that.

I believe that a change may be necessary to enable parents to exercise their own religious discretion. Let me give just one example of what has been done in another part of the world. In New South Wales, Australia, the legislative assembly passed a Bill saying:

"The parent of a child enrolled at a government school may give the Director-General of School Education written notice that the parent conscientiously objects on religious grounds to the child being taught a particular part of a course of study."

I believe that that is necessary. I believe that we must protect these people, particularly because of the very fact that they do not vote. The fact that they do not vote is a matter for them. Because they do not take what others would regard as a normal part in society, we have an even greater responsibility to protect them—against, for instance, the high-handed attitude displayed in the letters from which I have quoted.

2.42 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) for raising this issue, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) for attending the "swansong" of this part of our Session.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West has raised a very serious matter, and I know that the Brethren feel very strongly about it. It is a matter on which I have already spent considerable time since my arrival in my relatively new post, and I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) also spent a good deal of time considering it. It was considered exhaustively during the various procedures and thought processes that contributed to the building of the national curriculum.

The questions raised by my hon. Friend and by the Brethren are not only matters for the Brethren themselves; they relate to the position of all children who are educated in our maintained schools. The issue at stake is what sort of education we should provide for the majority of our youngsters to ensure that they leave school well prepared to meet the challenges that they will face throughout their lives.

One of the aims of the national curriculum is to ensure a broad and balanced education for all pupils of compulsory school age at maintained schools. That is part of a wider requirement—enshrined in section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988—to ensure that all pupils are fully prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. If we are not to sell children short, we must ensure that all pupils in maintained schools are given a thorough and relevant preparation for adult and working life.

It is essential that children are prepared for the world in which we live. Information technology is playing an increasingly significant role in contemporary life. Pupils cannot be prepared for a modern society in which the use of information technology is prevalent if they are not provided with some basic knowledge and understanding about information technology. This is not to prosyletise or encourage, but it is to inform. It is vital that young people are fully aware of and competent to use information technology. Not to include information technology in the national curriculum would be an immense disservice to future generations who will have to work and compete in a wider world with others.

To leave information technology optional would also disadvantage children in a country that must strive hard in a highly competitive and increasingly technological world. We therefore need to ensure that all pupils in state schools understand how information technology and its applications work. That is why the Government believe that IT education should be a requirement, not an option, under the national curriculum in maintained schools.

In particular, all pupils should have the opportunity to acquire some knowledge, skills and understanding about computers and their uses. This is a matter of curriculum content rather than delivery. Computer education is not simply a medium for teaching other subjects: information technology constitutes a subject for study in itself. That is why the national curriculum order for technology—along with those for maths, science and English—all involve the use of computers or word processors. Schools are not allowed to excuse children from these requirements; nor can local education authorities.

I can understand many of the Brethren's concerns about modern media which information technology supports in one way or another. Quite apart from religious beliefs, it is widely felt that television, radio and videos do not always portray the best in our society. I can appreciate why parents should wish to protect their children from the worst aspects of those media. Parents have rightly complained about materials which, while acceptable for adults, would be unsuitable for children in their early and formative years. I respect parents' views on those matters. The portrayal of sex and violence in various media and the

promotion of uncaring and irreligious attitudes, particularly among the young at an age when they are impressionable and vulnerable, rightly concern many people.

I respect the wish of Brethren parents to discourage their children from becoming too accustomed to television, radio and videos. That is irrespective of the Brethren's particular religious views. The Government have been at pains to ensure that the views of the Brethren were carefully considered. We have received a great many representations on their behalf. I have listened intensively to the views expressed by some of my constituents in Enfield, North. There has been very extensive correspondence about the whole issue, and my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden met representatives of the Brethren to discuss the matter. The subject was also aired in the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments when it considered the national curriculum orders in English and technology last June.

The use of television, radio and videos in schools is a question of the delivery rather than the content of the curriculum. The national curriculum emphatically does not require the use of such media. Schools remain free to choose their own teaching methods. The Government have done their best to ensure that shools are aware of this. Guidance has been offered on this point in a circular that was issued by my Department in March this year, along with the national curriculum order for technology. These documents made clear our hope that schools would have regard to parents' views in their choice of media for teaching purposes.

I have to make it clear that the guidance contained in the circular is not legally binding and that the final decision on teaching methods rests with schools. Although I can, and do, encourage schools to have regard to parents' views on teaching methods, the Government have no power to direct them to do so. Nevertheless, I would expect schools and local education authorities to be sensitive to the beliefs of families in considering teaching methods and teaching materials.

My hon. Friend referred to a number of letters and, in the phraseology of the old essay question, called on me to contrast and compare them. He referred to a letter from a school in Harrow. Although that school seems to be acting within the letter of the law, I regret the intransigent and hostile tone that was adopted and the lack of sensitivity that was shown. I hope that all schools will heed the advice that is given in my Department's circular 390, in which we encouraged head teachers and their staff to have regard to parents' views on the media used for teaching and, where practical, to provide individual pupils with alternative methods. My hon. Friend cited one or two examples of the way in which some schools were doing just that.

An important issue in making decisions about the use of such alternative materials should be whether pupils' access to the curriculum would be seriously harmed if they did not participate in lessons involving the use of those media. I hope that schools will adopt a friendly and helpful approach to members of the Brethen to find ways of meeting the school's legal obligations and of enabling Brethren children to remain within maintained schools.

I must stress that parents cannot exercise a right of veto by withdrawing their children from particular lessons if they disagree with the teaching methods that are used. There is nothing new in that. There has been a long-standing right under the Education Acts for parents to withdraw their children from religious education and collective worship in maintained schools. There has never been a parallel right of withdrawal from the secular curriculum of maintained schools.

The introduction of the national curriculum does not alter the historical position; nor does the Education Reform Act contain powers that would allow parents to decide which aspect of the national curriculum their children should follow.

My hon. Friend referred to article 2 of the first protocol to the European convention on human rights. The Government's view is that the article does not require the state to provide education in accordance with the particular religious or philosophical convictions of parents. Nor does it prevent the state from including in the school curriculum matters that do not accord with some parents' convictions, provided—this is a big proviso—that the material is presented in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. We believe that the requirements of the national curriculum are compatible with article 2.

We offer choice in education. Parents can opt to send their children outside maintained schools. They may send them to independent schools or educate them in some other way—for example, at home. We do not wish to exclude groups of people who have deeply held views from access to our maintained schools.

We have reviewed the Brethren's case thoroughly. We have looked extensively at ways in which it may be accommodated. I believe that at central Government level we have arrived at the best solution that can reasonably be expected. The Government have to take a broad perspective and, if we gave Brethren the right to withdraw their children from particular aspects of the national curriculum, other parents might well expect to get similar rights on grounds of other religious, conscientious or philosophical objections to other parts of the curriculum.

We do not, therefore, intend to introduce a conscience clause, which would encourage parents to withdraw their children from a variety of significant elements of the national curriculum. If every child in a maintained school could resort to a conscience clause, it would undermine the concept of the national curriculum. That would not be in the greater interest of education in this country. I recognise that my hon. Friend did not develop that line of argument, but on previous occasions the Brethren have indicated—they have done so to me personally—that that is an avenue which they would wish to pursue. However, as I said, we must exclude that option.

But—this is an important but—schools have a great deal of discretion in the way in which the curriculum is taught. I would expect that schools would be very responsive to the wishes and beliefs of parents in this. Just as they have put a great deal of time and effort into ensuring that materials and manner of delivery attempt to avoid a gender bias or a racial bias, to which my hon. Friend referred, so they should also ensure that they do not trample over people's beliefs. I am confident that the Government's reforms, which give parents far more freedom of choice in the school to which they send their children, will ensure that governors are aware of parents' feelings in this, and ensure that the national curriculum is delivered in an appropriate manner.

This does not, however, in any way enable young people in the maintained sector to opt out of any part of the national curriculum. The national curriculum was introduced to ensure that every child in a maintained

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

school would get an education that would serve him well for adult life and employment. We must not disadvantage those children as a whole. We must offer them nothing less than a full, broad and balanced curriculum. That decision has been reached for the greater good of the majority of children in this country. We remain firmly committed to that aim and to the national curriculum.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): On behalf of Mr. Speaker and my colleagues, may I extend to all right hon. and hon. Members our best wishes for an enjoyable Christmas and a happy new year? I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members join me in wishing all those who serve us in this building an enjoyable Christmas and happy 1991.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Three o'clock till Monday, 14 January, pursuant to the Resolution yesterday.

House of Commons

Monday 14 January 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Bypasses

1. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much central Government are making available to councils for the building of bypasses; and what is the comparable figure for the last three years.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The transport supplementary grant settlement announced on 17 December will make £207 million available to local authorities in 1991-92 for the building of bypasses. The equivalent figures for the past three years were £139 million, £157 million and £202 million respectively.

Mr. Mitchell: Since this is the first Question Time of 1991, I hope that it is in order to wish you, Mr. Speaker, and your staff a happy new year, in which I catch your eye many times.

In view of the importance that the Government attach to the building of bypasses for environmental, traffic and quality of life reasons, the fact that this year's transport supplementary grant settlement for Nottinghamshire showed an increase of 300 per cent. on last year and the fact that many of my constituents in Gedling village have had to wait nearly 60 years for Gedling bypass even to be put in the capital programme, will my right hon. and learned Friend at least urge Nottinghamshire county council to ensure that that important and much-needed road enters the capital programme as swiftly as possible?

Mr. Rifkind: I am well aware of the strong efforts that my hon. Friend has made to bring forward the date of that bypass. As he will appreciate, it is very much a matter for Nottinghamshire county council to decide whether to include that project in its programme. If it decides to do so, the project would be considered for TSG support at the appropriate time.

Mr. Lord: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend on behalf of my constituents in Suffolk, as their grant this year is being more than doubled, which will be greatly appreciated. I also hope that the extra money will speed up the arrival of a bypass that is much needed in the villages of Rickinghall and Botesdale, where villagers have waited many a long year for such a bypass to be built. I appreciate that this is a matter for the county council, but the villagers hope, as I do, that the bypass will soon be built.

Mr. Rifkind: I appreciate what my hon. Friend has said. I attach considerable importance to bypasses, which not only help the flow of traffic, but bring major environmental benefits to those who live in the towns and villages that are bypassed. The contribution of bypasses is increasingly important, given the pressures placed on local communities by the huge increase in the volume of traffic in recent years.

Mr. Skinner: Will the announcement include bypasses in the county of Derbyshire such as that at Glapwell in my constituency? Is it not a fact that money has not been allocated to Derbyshire because the standard spending assessment there is too low compared with those of Wandsworth and Westminster and if Derbyshire county council had as much money it could have gone forward with bypasses at Glapwell and other places in the county? Will the Secretary of State have a word with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to ensure that we receive the money next year?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman had a word with his local authority it might reduce its spending to benefit community charge payers in the constituency. The transport supplementary grant settlement will enable many worthwhile projects around the country to go forward in a way that would not otherwise be possible.

M25

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress in upgrading the M25.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to begin on the measures contained in his Department's action plan to improve the operation of the M25 motorway.

Mr. Rifkind: I announced on 3 December that the M25 is to be widened to four lanes, with better lighting and signalling including variable message signs, and that its junctions are to be improved to speed up traffic flows. The design work has now been started.

Mr. Marshall: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend to the Department of Transport, which proves that there is life after the Scottish Office. Many of us hope that England's roads will become as uncongested as Scotland's roads were under his leadership. Does he agree that the M25's history has been bedevilled by timid planning and inaccurate forecasts? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a six-lane highway or a second M25 is needed?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for his first comments, which I greatly appreciate.

The current proposal is that there should be a four-lane M25, although it is considered possible that some stretches of that road would be suitable for five lanes. It is always impossible to forecast traffic demand with certainty, but I believe that the M25, even in its present form, has led to considerable benefits, especially by reducing the number of heavy lorries in London. That is of great benefit to those who live in the metropolis.

Mr. Knapman: I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's statement just before Christmas on

improvements to the M25. Have adequate funds been made available for this purpose? What is the likely starting date?

Mr. Rifkind: I can assure my hon. Friend that the programme, which will take a number of years to implement, will be given a high priority in the spending resources of the Department.

The design work has already started; much of the work announced in the action plan is already in hand—for example, variable message signs and signals are to be installed with completion by early 1992 on part of the motorway and contracts for lighting improvements, as well as for a number of other detailed improvements, have been let. Road construction work takes longer because of design work and the necessary planning permission, but we intend to make as much progress as possible over the next few years.

Mr. Tony Banks: Given the scandalous chaos that surrounds the whole M25, what assurance can the Minister give that the planners will get it right this time when they got it so badly wrong the time before? Surely, the more one increases the number of lanes on motorways the more traffic is attracted to them. Would not one of the best ways of dealing with the problems of the M25 be to close it down?

Mr. Rifkind: Those who live in the south-east will learn with considerable interest of the view of Labour Members that we should redirect the huge number of vehicles that use the M25 back into London. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents would not be grateful for that. One hundred and sixty thousand vehicles a day use the busiest section of the M25 and if it were not available the hon. Gentleman's constituents would be very unimpressed by his suggestion.

Ms. Ruddock: The Secretary of State must know that by the time the fourth lane is completed traffic will have increased by 33 per cent. It cannot be beyond his imagination to accept that neither he nor his Department can provide sufficient road space to meet the increasing demand that his Department predicts. Does he agree with us that the time has come to look at the possibility of new orbital links on the railways around London to try to deal with the growth of traffic?

Mr. Rifkind: For a number of years now there have been substantial increases in investment in the railways. I have no doubt that the rail network will provide part of the solution to the transport needs of this part of the country, but the majority of the public will wish to continue using their own means of transport and it will be a responsibility of whichever party is in government to ensure that the road network can help to meet these requirements.

Mr. Dunn: While a general welcome has been given to the decision to provide lighting along most of the length of the M25, will the Secretary of State explain why it was decided not to provide lighting on the part of the M25 that goes through north-west Kent in general and Dartford in particular?

Mr. Rifkind: So far as I recollect, the only part of the M25 that is not to be provided with lighting is the part that has the lowest volume of traffic and where lighting was not thought to be necessary. However, I will happily look into the matter and write to my hon. Friend.

North-West England

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last visited the north-west of England by rail.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): Although my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not yet had the opportunity to visit the north-west by rail, his ministerial colleagues at the Department have done so on several occasions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Should the requirement for British Rail InterCity services to make a profit have precedence over the duty placed on BR to provide a full public service? If quality of service has priority, why is the frequency of service between London and the route centre of Penrith to be reduced to the disadvantage of the travelling public? That has given rise to some anger in the county.

Mr. Freeman: In our judgment there is nothing inconsistent between asking InterCity to make a profit—to earn revenue in excess of operating costs; it is one of the few railway systems in the world to achieve that—and the provision of a quality service. Of course that is not possible for regional railways and is currently not possible for Network SouthEast. However, it is possible for InterCity.

Mr. Fearn: When the Minister visits the north-west will he please look at the Burscough curves? Will he look at it with a view to opening up the south-west of Lancashire and especially my resort of Southport? The route was closed many years ago under the Beeching cuts and if it were reinstated it would open up the whole of south-west Lancashire and bring rail traffic from Scotland and the north.

Mr. Freeman: I shall certainly look at that when I next visit the north-west. The hon. Gentleman may care to note that when an investment proposition for regional railways is considered by British Rail and put to Ministers, approval does not necessarily hinge upon meeting an 8 per cent. financial rate of return. Where necessary, other criteria, including non-user benefits such as road decongestion, economic regeneration and other economic and social benefits, are taken into account.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend will be aware of the criticisms that are levelled against the Government about lack of investment in the north-west. However, I am sure that he is aware of the major investment that is taking place on the north-west main line from London to our major cities. The problems facing north-west travellers are to be found on the rural and minor urban lines, especially those between Liverpool and Preston where train frequency has been reduced. On his next visit to the north-west will he look into that matter as well?

Mr. Freeman: I assume that my hon. Friend refers to services on the west coast main line. I again confirm that British Rail still plans to upgrade the west coast main line at a cost of some £750 million to provide a two-hour service from London to Manchester. That is still firmly in the rail programme. In terms of improvements to services in the north-west, we recently approved the electrification of the line between Hooton and Chester and I am sure that that is greatly welcomed not only on Merseyside but by

Cheshire county council. We will look at all sensible propositions put forward by British Rail for improving services in the north-west.

Greater Manchester

4. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a public statement about transport in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Freeman: Today British Rail introduces class 158 vehicles to the transpennine route which links Manchester with Liverpool and Leeds and Newcastle. The rail link to the airport will open in 1993. The Metrolink light rail scheme is under construction and will open in about 12 months.

Mr. Bennett: Could the Minister explain to my constituents who, during 1988 and 1989, suffered a great deal every time they entered Manchester Piccadilly station because British Rail was carrying out so-called improvements to that station, why, even after those improvements, they are still suffering because of a poor service? Is he aware that the centre of Manchester was snarled up on several occasions before Christmas because of the large number of people using the roads there? They used those roads because they have totally lost confidence in British Rail's ability efficiently to run local services in and out of Manchester Piccadilly.

Mr. Freeman: I am aware of the discussions between the passenger transport authority and British Rail about section 20 support under the Transport Act 1968 for suburban services in Manchester. I understand that regional railways are seeking to resolve the reliability problems, particularly with older rolling stock such as the pacers and the older diesel units. As to the congestion in the centre of Manchester, I hope that the introduction of Metrolink, for which the taxpayer is providing a cash grant in excess of £50 million, will help congestion, particularly for those who travel from a south-westerly or northerly direction into Manchester. Let us hope that, in due course, it will be possible to extend the Metrolink to include and benefit the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Dickens: Is it not a fact that Manchester airport is the third largest in the United Kingdom and that the second terminal will double its capacity from 9 million to 18 million? Is it not also a fact that, of the £87 million that the Government earmarked for borrowing approvals, a lion's share has gone to Manchester international airport? Does not this speak volumes for Members of Parliament representing the north-west and for the Government, who have listened to what we have had to say?

Mr. Freeman: It speaks volumes for my hon. Friend and his colleagues who have strongly pressed the Government to support the expansion plans for the airport. My hon. Friend is correct to say that the new terminal at Manchester will permit a 50 per cent. increase in the number of passengers using it. The rail link from the centre of Manchester to the airport is well under way and will open in 1993, as I said to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). Further to that, there will be a road link to the airport. All will help the future growth and prosperity of Manchester.

Mr. Eastham: At this late hour, the House hopes that there will not be conflict in the Gulf, but great play has been made in the media of the fact that Manchester airport will be used to receive many of the casualties that may occur if there is a war.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about transport in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Eastham: That is what my supplementary is about. If there is a conflict and many casualties are directed to Manchester airport, will the Minister ensure that all contingency expenses such as reception, accommodation, security, nursing and transport are met from the central contingency fund rather than by the owners of Manchester airport?

Mr. Freeman: I note the seriousness of what the hon. Gentleman says. He would not wish me to comment in detail, but I undertake on behalf of my right hon. and learned Friend to get the answer to that question and to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Prescott: As the Minister has made clear, Manchester airport will be subjected to the new security measures introduced because of the Gulf crisis. Will he give us some idea of what those measures will be? Will they include inspection of all luggage that goes into the hold —a move against which the Government have set their face in the past—and the levy that is necessary to finance the machinery for that? Will he consider the economic regulations imposed by his Department on the airports that prevent them from raising the extra money to finance that essential part of security checking?

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will have heard the hon. Gentleman's question. The hon. Gentleman obviously does not expect me or any of my ministerial colleagues to comment on specific security measures at British airports or on advice to British airlines in the coming rather tense period. As to the examination of luggage going both to the hold and into the cabins of aircraft, my right hon. and learned Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister for Aviation will ensure that, in the coming troubled days and weeks, all necessary steps are taken to ensure that not only British travellers but those passengers visiting our shores can travel as safely as possible.

A69

6. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the dualling of the A69 west of Hexham.

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): We are continuing to make improvements to the A69, but traffic flows to the west of Hexham are light and not sufficient to justify dualling.

Mr. Amos: Given the Government's welcome decision to upgrade the A1 to motorway standard and to build the Prudhoe and Haltwhistle bypasses and the Ponteland relief road, the A69 is now the strategic east-west link road with the north of England. To get the A69 dualled, would my hon. Friend consider changing the relevant criteria so that they take account of vehicle movements, the nature of the road—it is narrow and hilly—and usage, bearing in mind that the road is used by many slow-moving, heavy

vehicles, including lorries and caravans? On the stretch of road to which I am referring, there have been 300 accidents in the past three years. It is the worst accident black spot in the north-east of England.

Mr. Chope: I am happy to confirm to my hon. Friend that the number of vehicles using a road is not the only criterion when we consider whether to construct a dual carriageway. We take into account the physical characteristics of the road and the number of heavy goods vehicles that use it, for example. Where there is evidence of accident black spots, the Government will be equipped to take specific remedial action.

Ms. Quin: May I stress to the Minister that his words will be a considerable disappointment to those in the Tyne and Wear conurbation? If the A69 were of better quality, it would provide a good link to the M5 and the rest of the country. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the last thing that we want for the A69 is the lethal mixture of dual and single carriageways which characterises the A1 north of Newcastle?

Mr. Chope: The Government have to set priorities for investment in the road infrastructure and I am happy to tell the hon. Lady that the north of England has done well. We are spending about £130 million on road infrastructure in the north of England—that is this year and last year —and there are programmes for about a further £110 million of investment. I am sure that the hon. Lady would wish that investment to be put forward on the most cost-effective basis.

Road Safety

7. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives he has to announce to improve road safety.

Mr. Chope: The first 20 mph speed limit zones will come into effect on 21 January—the first of many road safety initiatives that are planned for implementation this year.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that the most serious accident that could take place would involve a collision of lorries carrying toxic waste or liquefied gases? To avoid such an accident, and accidents generally, will the hon. Gentleman try to implement the two certain savers of accidents, which are daylight saving—that would avoid the deaths of up to 700 persons a year—and the introduction or wider use of speed retarders, which the Department's research has shown would reduce accidents by 15 per cent. on roads in general and by as much as 50 per cent. at specific sites? These measures would result in a great saving of life and reduce the dreadful level of injuries that are suffered on our roads. What is the hon. Gentleman doing about them?

Mr. Chope: Daylight saving is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, while speed limiters for heavy goods vehicles are very much the responsibility of the Department of Transport. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are examining carefully and closely whether we would be justified in introducing speed limiters for heavy goods vehicles. There is increasing concern about the intimidation that such vehicles present to many ordinary motorists. There is plenty of evidence that heavy goods vehicles are often driven at speeds far in excess of the limit that applies to them and that they are not driven as we would wish. That is why the Government are examining seriously the introduction of speed limiters, which we have already introduced for coaches.

Mr. Devlin: When the Government decide that the best improvement to road safety in a local area would be made by constructing a bypass, and grant money to a county council to be used to construct the bypass, will the Minister look into instances where county councils delay construction, including that of the Thornaby bypass where the county council is delaying for up to eight years implementation of the policy which the Government have approved and funded, when the road could be constructed over two or three years?

Mr. Chope: I share my hon. Friend's frustration at the shortcomings of Cleveland county council. There are too many examples of county councils and other highway authorities being given resources and then choosing not to spend them in the way that local Members and local communities would wish.

Ms. Walley: Does the Minister accept that far more priority should be given to local schemes, as opposed to major schemes, when transport supplementary grant is being settled? Further to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), does the Minister agree that in view of the many hazardous loads carried by road, which are set to increase as a result of the proposals to transport as many as 500,000 tonnes of toxic waste for incineration, more safety regulations need to be put into effect? When will the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee publish its findings on the sub-committee on dangerous substances report? Will the Department accept those recommendations in full, and will the Minister consider what more can be done in respect of local road safety?

Mr. Chope: As to local investment in safety schemes, in the coming financial year the Government will, for the first time, give transport supplementary grant for local safety schemes amounting to £30 million, which is in line with the amount recommended by the parliamentary advisory committee on transport safety. Next year's standard spending assessments for local authority road maintenance will increase by some 19 per cent., which means that some £1·75 billion will be available to local authorities to spend on their roads.

Mr. Gregory: Does my hon. Friend agree that one cause of accidents is the speed at which vehicles approach schools? Will he give serious consideration to the placing of speed humps at the sides of roads approaching schools, and the provision of additional flashing lights at a greater distance from the school than is done at present? If my hon. Friend needs to look further for an example, perhaps he could run an experiment in north Yorkshire.

Mr. Chope: The new speed hump regulations give local authorities flexibility to put forward the kind of scheme that my hon. Friend favours.

Channel Tunnel

8. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed with the chairman of British Rail plans for a direct rail link between the channel tunnel and the north of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I last met Sir Bob Reid on 12 December, when we discussed, among other things, rail links between the tunnel and the north.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Secretary of State agree that only a dedicated European-gauge track between the tunnel and north-east England and Scotland will reduce the divide between north and south and that failure to provide one will exacerbate that divide? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman take whatever steps are necessary to provide such a track?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not believe that there is any need for a dedicated track at present. If one were provided, it would divert substantial resources from other, more pressing railway requirements. It is important to ensure that demand for services from the channel tunnel can be fully met, but British Rail believes that that will be possible using the existing track, at least for the first few years.

Mr. Adley: Will my right hon. and learned Friend contemplate the incongruity and inequality as between road and rail in the answers given regarding the north of England at Question Time today? Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall the Minister for Roads and Traffic saying a few minutes ago that the A1 to the north of England is to be converted to a motorway, and that £130 million is to be provided for local roads in the north of England? Will the Secretary of State seriously review the criteria applied by the Department for investment in roads compared with those for investment in railways?

Mr. Rifkind: I read with interest the speech that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) made in the House last March, when he referred to that particular aspect. I am always prepared to consider any argument that there is unfairness or inconsistency in the way in which investment projects are appraised. We make a genuine attempt to assess them on a fair and equitable basis, but we will consider carefully any suggestions to improve our procedures.

Mr. Snape: Does the Secretary of State accept that not only will the north of England fail to receive through passenger trains when the channel tunnel opens, but that, with the proposed withdrawal of much of the Speedlink network, the north will also have fewer through freight trains? Is not that a further setback both for the railway industry and for the environment? Is the Secretary of State happy at the prospect of an additional 100,000 or more lorry movements on Britain's roads?

Mr. Rifkind: British Rail has said that there will be some delay with regard to through passenger services, not for reasons of resources but because the manufacturers have not yet been able to deliver a firm date and price for the modified rolling stock. Services will be available from day one, although they will involve some changes for passengers, probably at Waterloo. In relation to freight, I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point about the implications of the Speedlink decision for the channel tunnel. That decision arose out of the massive losses which British Rail was making on its existing Speedlink services. The hon. Gentleman will be as pleased as I am that about half the freight carried by Speedlink is to be retained by the rail network through new contracts with relevant customers.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept the need to ensure that the benefits of the channel tunnel are shared by all regions of the United Kingdom? In that context, has he seen the report recently published by the Transport Users Consultative Committee for western England which draws attention to the need for a direct link to the south-west through Swindon?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Unfortunately, the question is about the north-east.

Mr. Rifkind: I accept what my hon. Friend said—there is bound to be legitimate interest in various parts of the kingdom in having the benefits of the channel services. Essentially, it is for British Rail to decide whether there will be a demand such as to justify providing that service. I hope that it will consider carefully the points made by my hon. Friend.

Newham Way, Canning Town

9. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a visit to Newham way at Canning Town to discuss the building of a footbridge to enable pedestrians to cross that road without use of a subway.

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport visited Canning Town on 2 January, in the company of the hon. Member.

Mr. Spearing: I thank the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) for promptly accepting that, invitation. Does the Minister agree that, as safety factors are involved, and when millions of pounds are being spent to allow more traffic to travel more quickly through the area, the case is even stronger than that made at the time?

Mr. Chope: Certainly, I am considering the points put to me by my hon. Friend arising out of his visit. One has to have regard to the fact that there are existing subway crossings under that road, and obviously that has to be taken into account when considering the future.

Red Routes

10. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what monitoring of the effect of red routes is planned by his Department.

Mr. Chope: There will be a full programme of monitoring for the pilot red route scheme.

Mr. Corbyn: A happy new year to you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Minister aware that red routes are being introduced in Islington and in part of Haringey despite the total opposition of people in the area and their local authorities, that when I cycled along the red route this morning it was in its normal traffic-jammed state, with the usual levels of pollution, and that when the red routes were introduced last week the police tried to remove a post van which was emptying a mail box and threatened to remove a disabled person's car? Are not the red routes really a

system of bringing more traffic, more danger and more pollution in central London, when what we need is a restriction on private cars going in and out of central London?

Mr. Chope: I do not agree at all with what the hon. Gentleman says. Indeed, a letter in *The Times* today confirms that some of the principal beneficiaries of red routes are buses and their passengers. When I visited the red routes last Wednesday, there was certainly evidence that traffic was flowing much more freely. So far, the red routes seem to have been generally well received and when Islington council has got its act together and completed the red route, I am sure that they will be even better received.

Mr. Jessel: As red routes are an excellent idea, and as experience in Paris shows that they will improve the traffic flow, will my hon. Friend get on with it and not have too full a programme of monitoring?

Mr. Chope: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that extra encouragement. We shall do our best to get the Road Traffic Bill enacted as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that the red routes will prove of great value to people in London, not least to people who are currently plagued by rat runs? Does he also agree that red routes should not be seen as a single item, but as part of a package with improved public transport—which we hope will come shortly in the London assessment study announcement—and with greater park-and-ride facilities on the edges of London?

Mr. Chope: I very much agree with the points that my hon. Friend has made. The red routes are at heart a very comprehensive transport strategy for London.

Network SouthEast

11. **Mr. Cartwright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the quality of services on Network SouthEast.

Mr. Freeman: We have regular meetings with the chairman of British Rail, at which we discuss a wide range of issues.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Minister understand that last week's tragedy at Cannon Street station has merely reinforced the fear felt by many commuters from south-east London and Kent that they are being forced to accept a second-class service? Welcome though the new Networker trains will undoubtedly be, they will not automatically bring relief from sudden cancellations, late running, dirty carriages, unhelpful staff and unmanned stations. When will British Rail give those captive commuters a quality of service that would justify the ever-rising fares?

Mr. Freeman: As the hon. Gentleman knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be making a statement in due course about the tragic accident at Cannon Street station.

The introduction of new Networker trains for the Kent inner routes, which will commence in September, will bring an improvement in the quality of service and, with the lengthening of platforms, will definitely reduce congestion. The hon. Gentleman is right to point to other qualitative factors on Network SouthEast that have not been dealt with. We and British Rail—Network SouthEast in particular—are considering how those problems should be addressed.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

27. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects a date to be set for the appeal of the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects a date to be set for the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The Court of Appeal has fixed 25 February 1991 for the commencement of the substantive hearing. It also proposes to hold a further preliminary hearing in early February. I will not make a statement; the case is sub judice.

Mr. Mullin: Who authorised the suppression of documents relating to forensic tests carried out on passengers on a ferry between Liverpool and Belfast on 21 November?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House has heard what the Attorney-General said about the matter. The case has been set down for trial, and it is sub judice.

Mr. Mullin: And why were those documents not available at the original trial, or at the appeal——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The whole House knows the rules that apply to such matters.

Mr. Mullin: It is not sub judice. It is a matter of record.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Tony Banks.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Attorney-General aware of newspaper reports to the effect that the Director of Public Prosecutions said at his new year party that the forensic evidence was to be dropped? Is that so? And if it is so, why have defence counsel not been told about it?

The Attorney-General: I am not aware of any of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman refers. As for the stance that the Director of Public Prosecutions takes on the hearing of the substantive appeal, that must rest with the Director—who, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is the holder of an independent statutory office. I can add nothing more to that.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this whole unhappy affair, which stretches back some years and in which so many innocent people were killed, should be settled once and for all? Her Majesty's Government have served the sense of justice well —there have been two trials already. When the appeal comes up, however, can we settle the whole matter once and for all? The Birmingham people do not seek vengeance; they seek justice. Someone, somewhere was

guilty—and the least guilty people are not just those in prison but the many who suffered and died on that dreadful night.

The Attorney-General: I very much agree with my hon. Friend about the desirability of the matter's being settled, as he puts it, once and for all. Perhaps the House will permit me to cite what was said by Lord Justice Lloyd at the preliminary hearing on 17 December:

"We have to balance the imperative need for expedition in this appeal which we wholeheartedly accept with the equally imperative need that on this occasion the decision of the court should be taken on the basis not only of the material now available but also on such further material as will become available when the inquiry of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary has been completed."

Mr. John Morris: Like the whole House, I wish to avoid any infringement of the sub judice rule. Therefore, I couch my question in this form: once the appeal is heard, will the Attorney-General lay before the House a full statement, in the form of a paper, on the general implementation of the Attorney-General's guidelines on the disclosure of unused material in prosecutions, the extent to which they have not been implemented in prosecutions in recent years, and whether any requests for the full disclosure of documents have been turned down when inquiries have been made by other police forces?

The Attorney-General: I shall, of course, consider the right hon. and learned Gentleman's request, but I do not give any commitment.

Mr. Dickens: Has my right hon. and learned Friend noticed that six of the 10 questions to him on the Order Paper today are about the Birmingham Six and that they are identical?

Mr. Tony Banks: You do not care.

Mr. Dickens: The hon. Gentleman says that I do not care, but am I being mischievous in suggesting that this has more to do with the large Irish vote in those Members' constituencies and less to do with the sincerity of their case?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: What is it?

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) questions the sincerity of hon. Members. Normally, that is unacceptable. I would certainly suggest——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the integrity of hon. Members is in question.

Ms. Short: It is.

Mr. Speaker: Such comments do not help us, but I do not think that that particular question was out of order.

Mr. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I happen to be one of those hon. Members who tabled a question. I tabled it because of my considerable concern about a miscarriage of justice. It has nothing to do with my own constituents or their backgrounds. It seems to me, therefore, that you should require the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth to withdraw what he said.

Mr. Speaker: I have heard many rougher things said in the House.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No, No!

Mr. Dickens: I was going to withdraw what I said, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman had better get up and do it, then.

Mr. Dickens: In order to assist the Chair and any hon. Members whom I might have offended, I withdraw my remark about their sincerity.

Mr. Speaker: Very well. Let us move on.

Crown Prosecution Service

29. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the latest position on Crown prosecution service staffing levels.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): Recruitment in the Crown prosecution service has improved during 1990. Lawyers in post are now 1,686 against an increased total requirement of 2,053. As to administrative staff and law clerks, against a total requirement of 3,670, 3,636 are in post.

Mr. Allen: Can the Solicitor-General tell us anything about the workload of the Crown prosecution service? Does it not have enough to do without hundreds of hours of Crown prosecution service time being frittered away in seeking to sustain the conviction of the Birmingham Six and save the face and pride of Lord Lane?

The Solicitor-General: That is a backdoor way of getting in on a previous question about a matter which is entirely sub judice. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would accept that in this country we have an open and careful system of justice. That is what the Court of Appeal will administer.

Mr. Vaz: The Solicitor-General has confirmed, by his own admission to the House, that the Crown prosecution service is still grossly understaffed. It is one fifth down on the staff that it requires. When will the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General accept the recommendations of the Select Committee on Home Affairs and give the CPS the resources that it so desperately needs?

The Solicitor-General: There were many good things in the recommendations of the Select Committee. It is true that the Crown prosecution service is still only about 80 per cent. staffed, compared with its complement, but it is also true that in its four years of existence it has managed to increase its complement by more than one third. It is making very considerable improvements, just as it did throughout the past year.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

30. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects a date to be set for the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Attorney-General confirm that senior judges are saying that the Guildford Four were guilty, despite the fact that they were released by the court? What hope is there for a genuinely fair trial for the Birmingham Six when, apparently, senior members of the judiciary do not accept the findings of the Court of Appeal in relation to the Guildford Four?

The Attorney-General: I confirm nothing of the kind.

Legal Aid

31. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps are taken to encourage the use of representative actions where a substantial number of persons seek legal aid for actions arising out of substantially similar facts.

The Solicitor-General: In cases involving a number of parties and substantially similar facts, applications for legal aid are all referred to the same legal aid area office. Decisions on the grant of legal aid are made in such a way as to encourage representative procedures where appropriate.

Mr. Trimble: Is the Solicitor-General aware of the number of cases that have recently been commenced in the High Court in Belfast against the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? All those cases involve the possibility of information on terrrorist suspects getting into the hands of rival paramilitary organisations, and those suspects have commenced action. I understand that there are more than 50 such actions, with virtually consecutive writ numbers and the same firm of solicitors, but all are being routinely processed for legal aid. Does the Solicitor-General agree that a single action would be sufficient to establish what merits, if any, there may be and that it is a considerable waste of public money for all 50 actions to be individually granted legal aid?

The Solicitor-General: I am aware of the general fact that such actions have been commenced, but I do not know the detail. If they are as the hon. Gentleman says, I am sure that the legal aid authority in Northern Ireland —the Law Society—will consider carefully the points that he has made to see whether such representative action might be appropriate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

The Gulf

37. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will introduce a programme of ecological aid to the littoral countries of the Persian Gulf.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): No. We seek to concentrate our development aid on the poorest countries, not richer ones like those in the Gulf.

Mr. Dalyell: What contingency plans have been made to cope with the problems of photochemical smog and the excessive release of hydrocarbons, which Paul Crutzen, atmospheric physicist at the Max Planck Institute of Atmospheric Physics in Maine—the leading authority in the world on these matters—says may be the major problem? If the object is to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, rather than a war that will end God knows where, why has not thought been given to diverting the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates in Syria and Turkey?

Mrs. Chalker: The Meteorological Office, the Department of Energy, the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Defence are working on possible scenarios, but the best way of avoiding ecological damage in the Gulf——

Mr. Dalyell: Is not war.

Mrs. Chalker: It is for Saddam Hussein to withdraw unconditionally from Kuwait today.

Mr. Carrington: In the event of a Gulf war, which we must all hope does not occur, and the likely increase in oil prices that will result from it, will my right hon. Friend consider increasing aid to third-world countries which are dependent on oil for their energy resources and which will be severely hit by their inability to pay the new high prices?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend may already be aware that we have been working with the International Monetary Fund and the World bank to see what additional help can be given. The European Community agreed a package of 1,500 mecu for Turkey, Egypt and Jordan, which is exactly the way in which we should be helping. We are well aware of the pressures on developing countries and we shall consider the matter as time rolls by. We hope very much that there will be a withdrawal from Kuwait, which will end the extra pressure on the developing countries.

Sir David Steel: Does the Minister accept that, as I have seen for myself in the past few days, Jordan's greater and urgent need is for further help in dealing with the problem of transit refugees through the country? Will she acknowledge that Jordan has done a magnificent job but is still out of pocket?

Mrs. Chalker: The right hon. Gentleman knows very well that we have already helped Jordan through the various international agencies, which I saw when I was there in September. We are in touch with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The Geneva-based agencies this morning issued an appeal. We are working on a contingency plan and when I have more details I may be able to respond to the right hon. Gentleman.

Eastern Bloc (Food Distribution)

38. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to assist with the distribution of food within the Soviet Union and other former eastern bloc countries.

Mrs. Chalker: We believe that economic reform in the Soviet Union is essential if a prosperous and democratic society is to emerge. Reform of food distribution systems is a priority under the know-how fund. However, we

deplore the Soviet army's action in Lithuania and we are discussing the whole issue with our EC partners in Brussels today.

Mr. Tredinnick: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I had lunch with President Landsbergis in the House just two months ago. Even then, he was fearful that his country would be taken over by the red army. Does my right hon. Friend agree that what is crucial in the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc is not so much the production and supply of food as its distribution? Does she have any proposals to improve the distribution of food within those countries and is she doing anything to assist studies on that aspect?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is no famine in the USSR, which had a record grain harvest—better than the predicted vegetable harvest. The problem is distribution. That is why I am glad that British expertise from private companies has been used in an attempt to determine what can be done to improve food distribution. The Anderson Consulting firm has examined the Soviet bread consortium, and the British Food Consortium has carried out a study of the food chain around Kiev. Major steps can be taken, but, of course, we wish to help the people and any further use of force by the Soviet Government could jeopardise western aid to the Soviet Union greatly.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the right hon. Lady accept that we all wish to see genuine assistance given to the emergent democracies and, indeed, the ordinary citizens of the Soviet Union? Will the Foreign and Commonwealth Office issue a clear condemnation of the behaviour of President Gorbachev and the Soviet troops in Lithuania and of the continuing threat to the Baltic states, both of which are in clear contradiction to United Nations article 1? We want a clear statement of condemnation from the west at this stage.

Mrs. Chalker: That is why in my initial reply I condemned the action of the Soviet army. The matter is being discussed within the European Community today. We shall have Foreign and Commonwealth diplomatic questions on Wednesday, when I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will have a lot more to say on the matter.

The Baltic states are eligible to receive our aid, but, as yet, they do not seem to be seriously affected by food shortages. It seems that the shortages are in the large industrial cities. We shall give them help and we are already giving technical assistance to the Baltic states. We shall continue to do so if possible.

Sir Bernard Braine: While I imagine that everyone in the House supports the idea of giving food or any other type of aid to the hard-pressed countries of eastern Europe, is not it untimely and even a little indecent to suggest that we should give aid to the Soviet Union at a moment when it is reverting to type and sending armed troops into Lithuania, which, like the other two Baltic states, was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union and deserves its freedom?

Mrs. Chalker: As my right hon. Friend knows full well, I agree with him entirely. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said yesterday, there is a real danger that the Soviet Union will go back into its Stalinist shell. The freedom of the Baltic states is important and we sincerely hope that the measures put into force some months ago will be allowed to continue to help the Soviet people by the Government of the Soviet Union and its president seeing the sense of stopping the abominable behaviour that we saw over the weekend in Lithuania.

Dr. David Owen: The right hon. Lady is surely right to call it abominable behaviour. Does she agree that it is also wrong to continue giving credit to the Soviet Union and transfering high technology, both of which should be stopped instantly by the European Community and the western democracies?

Mr. Chalker: I am certain that the right hon. Gentleman's points are being discussed at this very moment in Brussels. We telephoned Brussels before we came to the House to answer questions today. I cannot given the right hon. Gentleman an answer as to what has happened there, but we hope to do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my right hon. Friend consider the problems that might arise in central European countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia if there are refugees from the Baltic states? More food aid may well need to be directed to Poland and Czechoslovakia to cope with the terrible problems provoked by the Soviet Union's aggression towards its own people.

Mrs. Chalker: I can assure my hon. Friend that, if Poland or any of the other states needs help to cope with refugees from the Soviet Union, we shall be ready to help. It is most important that diplomatic pressure from all over the world should have its effect on the Government of the Soviet Union so that this deplorable behaviour ceases forthwith in the Baltic states and everywhere else.

Mrs. Clwyd: We all share the great concern about repression in Lithuania. Does the Minister agree that there is plenty of evidence that the Soviet people wish to see a further development of glasnost and perestroika? Given that today she has said that it is important to help those people, may we have her assurance that she will honour the pledges made by the European Community to give emergency food aid to help Soviet citizens weather the winter?

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Lady knows full well that when the Foreign Ministers of the European Community sit together in Brussels and discuss this very issue I cannot give any undertaking about what they may have decided. I take her point that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) who raised the question said, the food problem in the Soviet Union is not famine, but distribution. If we can help the Soviet Union to tackle that problem, we shall be making a long-term investment to help the Soviet people make the best of their production.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement.

The business for tomorrow, Tuesday 15 January, will now be a debate on the crisis in the Gulf on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. The Export and Investment Guarantees Bill previously set down for that day will be taken shortly.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I thank the Leader of the House for arranging yet another debate on the grave crisis in the Gulf. It will enable us to place on record our emphatic support for the United Nations and for all efforts to find a peaceful solution. If, regrettably, armed conflict occurs—we have never ruled that out—the British forces will have our total support.

We have witnessed deplorable occurrences in Lithuania in the past 24 hours. Will the Leader of the House arrange as soon as is convenient to the House for the Foreign Secretary to make an oral statement on those events? Can that be discussed and agreed through the usual channels?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously the first matter which the hon. Gentleman raised will be the feature of tomorrow's debate. Every effort has been made to achieve a peaceful outcome, and I am grateful for his support for the British forces.

The whole House will be greatly concerned about events in Lithuania and I well understand why the hon. Gentleman raised that matter. The Government strongly deplore the action of the Soviet forces. We have made our views clearly known to the Soviet authorities. As the House knows, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is in Brussels today at an emergency meeting to discuss the events in Lithuania as well as the situation in the Gulf. Apart from that meeting, the Government are seeking clarification from the Soviet authorities.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall keep the House fully informed as the situation develops in the coming days. We can discuss the appropriate means and timing of that through the usual channels. My right hon. Friend will certainly wish to make some sort of statement.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): Does my right hon. Friend agree that tomorrow's important debate on the Gulf should reflect in its tone as well as in its content the seriousness and gravity of the unwarranted aggression and intransigence of Iraq? Does he also agree that its tone will compare dramatically with the despicable attitude of some parts of the media which seem to treat the growing prospect of war as something akin to a world cup football spectacular?

Mr. MacGregor: I note what my hon. Friend says. I do not want today to go into the substance of tomorrow's debate, but I am sure that such matters will be raised.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Leader of the House aware that, by choosing to table an Adjournment motion tomorrow, the Government have excluded, by a procedural device, any possibility for amendments to be tabled by those who believe that sanctions should be given more time to work or that there should be further negotiation? The Government's handling of the matter is in marked contrast to that of the American Congress, where the Senate has been allowed to vote, and has voted, as has the House of Representatives.

Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware—I raised this with Mr. Speaker this afternoon—that this is the first time in the history of this country that British troops have been sent into battle under foreign command, using the royal prerogative of war-making to do so, without the House having had an opportunity to express its view on any motion other than that we adjourn? Since such a war could end with the exchange of nuclear weapons, it is an outrage to parliamentary democracy that the Government should have chosen to use this mechanism for giving the House the chance to express its view on such a grave matter for the world and for the people of this country.

Mr. MacGregor: I should have thought that it was clear that the Government had given this House many opportunities to debate the situation in the Gulf and that we are taking the first appropriate opportunity this week to have a debate on it again. The previous debate was on a motion for the Adjournment of the House and we judged that it was appropriate to have the debate tomorrow again on a motion for the Adjournment to enable all shades of view to be expressed and to allow the maximum flexibility for relevant issues to be raised. I think that that is the right way to proceed.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many Conservative Members endorse the request of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for a statement by the Foreign Secretary on the disgraceful events in Lithuania so that we can express our hope that economic aid will be cut to the Soviet Union as a sign of our total and utter disgust at what its troops did yesterday?

Mr. MacGregor: As I have already said, I entirely understand my hon. Friend's point. It is right that, at an appropriate time, my right hon. Friend should make a statement to the House. Clearly it was not appropriate for a statement to be made today, given that my right hon. Friend is in Brussels at the Foreign Affairs Council discussing these matters.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow Govan): Is the Leader of the House aware that there is a significant difference between the previous debates that terminated on a motion for the Adjournment, which allowed the issues to be examined and ventilated, and tomorrow's debate, which will be on the eve of a possible war? A few moments ago he said that tomorrow's debate should allow all shades of opinion to be registered. But the debate should also allow all shades of opinions to be registered on a vote.

What we really require is for the Government to table a motion of Government policy that is capable of amendment. It is unacceptable for people to be forced to vote for or against the Adjournment and then to have that technical vote interpreted exactly as the Government want.

Mr. MacGregor: There will be an opportunity for hon. Members to raise all sorts of issues and to express their views in the House tomorrow. Last time there was, of course, a vote on the Adjournment and no doubt that could happen again if necessary. This is the right way for a debate of this sort to proceed.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Is my right hon. Friend aware that on the two previous occasions when we debated this issue there was a serious discussion about the imminence of war? Tomorrow will not be the first occasion on which we shall be confronted by an imminent war but rather the first occasion when a date associated with United Nations sanctions has been identified.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that the House wants to debate this matter and that is why I made today's statement and why we took the decision to have that debate at the most sensible earliest opportunity.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Does the Leader of the House agree that, by refusing the House of Commons the opportunity to legitimise or reject Government policy, the Government will do nothing other than to reconfirm in many minds the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that the Government have no right to ask young men to die in the Gulf if they do not have the courage to ask the House to vote on a specific motion?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not believe that that is the case. In tomorrow's debate, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will clearly outline the Government's position.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. Friend recognises that many hon. Members believe that events in Lithuania threaten world peace every bit as much as events in the Gulf. When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary makes a statement will the House also have the opportunity to debate that subject fully so that the House can send a clear message to Mr. Gorbachev and the Soviet Government that invasion of Lithuania is no more acceptable than invasion of Kuwait?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said. The views of the House can be expressed in other ways, not simply through debate. The right first step would be for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to make a statement to the House or answer a question at the appropriate time.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): We welcome tomorrow's debate. Will the Leader of the House confirm that it has been agreed between the Front-Bench spokesmen that the debate should be on the Adjournment? Will he also confirm that, if there is war during the following days, tomorrow's debate should not be seen as the Government's acceptance of the inevitability of war, even at this late stage, and that procedures for debating matters arising from the conflict in the Gulf should be the subject of immediate consultation among all parties and, if possible, of agreement among all parties?

Mr. MacGregor: I am sure that on this matter, as on subjects such as events in Lithuania at present, there will be the need for continuous parliamentary discussion. I certainly intend to discuss the arrangements for such debates through the usual channels.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the answer he gave a moment ago on the subject of Lithuania? Events there may move rapidly and Mr. Gorbachev may not be in complete control. Suggestions have been made today that he is not in complete control and that other elements are insisting on repressing the people of Lithuania. The people of the three Baltic states have been oppressed for a generation. It is not sufficient for the Foreign Secretary merely to make a statement and answer questions. If that were accompanied by the promise of an early debate, the House would be content—at least until the debate took place—and then we could see the shape of things to come.

Mr. MacGregor: I wholly understand my right hon. Friend's concern, which I share. I was simply saying that the first appropriate step would be for my right hon. Friend to make a statement, but clearly, as events unfolded, we would wish to see what other parliamentary opportunities there should be.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Leader of the House accept that the fact that the exchanges have inevitably and rightly concentrated on the problems in the Gulf and the Baltic states underlines the serious concern of seven aid agencies that launched a campaign last week to remind the House and the country that people are dying today in large numbers in Ethiopia, Africa, Mozambique and Angola? Does he accept that that is such a serious matter that time should be found for a debate on it?

Mr. MacGregor: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government made a statement on that issue just before the Christmas recess, recognising the seriousness of the position and indicating the action that we were taking. We made that statement then because we thought it right to inform the House before the recess. Clearly we shall have to see what happens and consider the appropriate way to keep the House informed about the position and the Government's action; but that is not an issue for tomorrow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: May I remind the House that questions to the Leader of the House——

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): It is an important issue.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is, of course, important, but questions should be directed to the statement and not to wider issues.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): In tomorrow's debate some hon. Members may wish to refer to the effectiveness of sanctions. Therefore, will my right hon. Friend discuss with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary placing in the Library a list of those countries that we know have been breaking sanctions so that hon. Members can compare those countries' actions with the amount of aid they receive from British taxpayers?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall pass on my hon. Friend's request to my right hon. Friend.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is the Secretary of State aware that it is very difficult for Back Benchers to be called in short debates such as tomorrow's? Will he grant time for a debate on what is to happen to the thousands of casualties when they come to this country in the event of war breaking out—given the admission by the Secretary of State for Defence yesterday that there would be thousands of casualties? The Under-Secretary of State for Health says that everything is prepared, yet all medical opinion stresses that we are not prepared and that we cannot cope with the

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

number of casualties that might be incurred in the event of a conflict. Is not it a disgrace that a Department of Health document omitted a chapter that warned of the casualties that would be incurred due to gas and other noxious fumes? Should not the public be told what could face our service men and women in the Gulf in the event of this wholly unnecessary, cruel war breaking out?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to go into the substance of what the hon. Lady has said, because that is a matter for the debate tomorrow. As you, Mr. Speaker, have said, this statement is about tomorrow's debate and tomorrow's business: we are to hold a full debate on the Gulf tomorrow. That is as far as I can go at this stage. The important point is that we are providing a full day for the debate tomorrow.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Although some of us have had concerns about United States policy in the middle east over the years, is my right hon. Friend aware that, as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has rightly said, it would be unthinkable for the House to do anything other than to give its wholehearted support to our forces in the Gulf and, through them, to the Government's decisions? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the procedure that he has announced has been agreed between the usual channels?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I think that the procedure that I have announced is for the convenience of the House and is the right way to proceed tomorrow.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Leader of the House accept that my party thinks it totally unacceptable that a major decision on international policy should be taken by the House without a substantive discussion on a substantive motion? If that is good enough for the United States Congress, it should be good enough for the United Kingdom House of Commons.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also accept that it is equally urgent that we debate Lithuania? Many of us are worried that this is yet another unholy carve-up between the great powers—that there is collaboration between sections of the Bush Government and the Soviet Union whereby support for the United States position in the Gulf is traded off for a lack of intervention to defend the human rights of the people of Lithuania?

Mr. MacGregor: Tomorrow's debate will be a substantive debate. As for a debate on Lithuania, we must see how events unfold. I have given the House a clear assurance that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will report to it at the earliest appropriate moment.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to bear it in mind that we have another statement after this one and that we shall debate this matter tomorrow. I shall call three more Members from each side and then move on.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I welcome tomorrow's debate, which will give hon. Members a chance to underline to Saddam Hussein, in all his pigheaded obstinacy, the determination of the vast majority of the British people that unprovoked aggression can never be condoned and that appeasement is a path not to peace but to further aggression.

Mr. MacGregor: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that the messages going out from this House tomorrow will be very clear.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Leader of the House ensure that before tomorrow's debate the House will be given a substantive assessment of the various issues that will arise if a conflict occurs? Only recently the Prime Minister said that he hoped that the conflict would be short and sharp. Is that a hope or a reasonable expectation? Evidence on oil and on the environment has not been presented to the House in any form, nor have we been told of the economic consequences for the nation of such a conflict. Surely before the debate we ought to be provided with more assessments by Departments and Ministers.

Mr. MacGregor: The point of the debate is to go over much of this ground. That is one of the many reasons why we are holding it tomorrow.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend accept that what we are discussing now, and will be discussing tomorrow, is the fact that, for once in 50 years, the whole world has decided that the United Nations is right. It has passed 12 resolutions. The debate tomorrow is not about America or Britain but about the world against one demonic man. Surely the House should say not that there is a need for debate but that that man should know before it is too late that the world—not just Britain or America—is united in its belief that he should get out of Kuwait. If he does not get out of Kuwait, it will be not America's or Britain's fault but his.

Mr. MacGregor: In recent weeks that view has been expressed loudly, clearly and at length. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Tomorrow's debate will provide another opportunity for hon. Members to express my hon. Friend's view.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): While I am sure that there is widespread agreement in the House about the murderous activities of Saddam Hussein, surely there are profound and genuinely sincere differences of view about President Bush's interpretation of resolution 678 and other matters relating to the middle east crisis. It is disgraceful that we are not to have a two-day debate because every hon. Member must have some constituents serving with the military forces in Saudi Arabia. If, because of the sleekit way in which arrangements for the debate have been handled, we cannot have a two-day debate, may we ensure that every speaker in the debate is confined to 10 minutes so that most of us who have constituents out there may at least get a chance to voice our genuinely sincere views on this deeply worrying affair?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman's procedural point about tomorrow's debate is not a matter for me. However, I am sure that his suggestion has been heard. It is important to stress again that the House is, absolutely rightly, being given the opportunity to debate this matter at the earliest convenient opportunity on our return. Obviously, it will not by a long way be the last occasion on which we debate these matters.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): In view of the evident deep feeling about tomorrow's debate, and because historically on such occasions every opportunity is given for minority views to be expressed, will my right hon. Friend at least discuss with the Opposition the suspension of the 10 o'clock rule?

Mr. MacGregor: We can certainly consider that matter through the usual channels.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): May I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and the Leader of the House to reconsider? This Parliament will be brought into total disrepute if we do not have a vote on the matter of war in the Gulf. We saw what happened in the American Senate where each member had to put his points on the line. Under this procedure, power is concentrated in the Executive and there is no way in which the Executive can be made accountable to our constituents on the question of a war that could mean not just the deaths of our service men but a horrendous war in the middle east. This is not the mother of Parliaments if that is the way in which we conduct our business. It is just a blanket for the Executive to do whatever they wish.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already said that I think that this is the right way to proceed. The very strong majority view was perfectly clear from the debate and the vote on this procedural method that we had before the Christmas recess. What we recommend for tomorrow will enable all views to be expressed and will also enable that message to be made clear.

Dr. Cunningham: It may be for the convenience of the House for me to say that on Wednesday, which is an Opposition Supply day, we have set down for debate the crisis in the hospital service, and the consequences for the British economy and people of electricity privatisation.

Rail Accident (Cannon Street)

3.52 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the railway accident that occurred at Cannon Street station on Tuesday 8 January.

At about 8.44 last Tuesday morning, the 7.58 Sevenoaks to Cannon Street train collided with the buffer stops at Cannon Street station. The effect of the impact was most severe in the fifth and sixth coaches of the 10-coach train. One passenger died and more than 200 were injured.

The House will want to join me in expressing our sympathy to the bereaved and our hopes for the speedy recovery of the injured. I also pay tribute to the professionalism of the emergency services. The response by all involved was magnificent.

British Rail has accepted responsibility for the accident and is carrying out its own internal inquiry. The British Transport police are also conducting an investigation.

Officers from the Health and Safety Executive, including Her Majesty's railway inspectorate, attended the scene of the accident immediately. After consultation with the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, I have appointed the deputy chief inspecting officer of railways to carry out this inquiry under the Regulation of Railways Act 1871. His inquiry will be wholly independent and will be held in public. The report will be published. I have asked him to report to me as quickly as possible. British Rail will, of course, act immediately should the need for any urgent measures emerge during the various investigations.

Her Majesty's railway inspectorate's investigation began on the day of the accident. The train was examined and some testing took place before it was removed from the station. The train has now been moved to a British Rail depot where British Rail engineers have been conducting further examinations and tests under the inspectorate's supervision. The forensic capabilities of the Health and Safety Executive will be at the disposal of the inspectorate, if they are needed. The House will appreciate that these examinations and tests are being undertaken extremely thoroughly. The cause of the accident is not yet clear and it is unwise to speculate on the conclusions of the inquiry until all the evidence is available.

There has, however, been widespread speculation about the age of this rolling stock, which is some of the oldest on BR, and about the number of passengers on the train. The inquiry will of course be considering these aspects, but there appear to be no grounds for concluding at this stage that the age of the rolling stock was a material factor in causing the accident.

There has also been comment about the consequences of the train being heavily loaded, with many passengers standing. In his report on the Clapham accident, Sir Anthony Hidden accepted the view of safety experts that, in that accident, standing passengers were at no greater risk of death or injury than those who were seated and that if the trains had been overloaded, those passengers having to stand as a result would not have been placed at any greater risk. Nevertheless, he recommended that BR should ensure that overall train loading criteria were achieved and that the criteria should be kept under review. In response to this recommendation, BR made it clear that

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strong demand growth has created a problem of overcrowding on some routes, and that it is committed to tackling this through investment in new rolling stock. I understand the very natural concern about overcrowding. I can assure the House that the inquiry will consider the number of passengers that were on the train and any implications that this may have had.

These commuter services have some of the oldest trains, but neither the Government nor BR is complacent about this. We have approved both the replacement of the present trains with new rolling stock which has higher capacity and the lengthening of the platforms on the stations they will use, in order to give passengers a better quality of service. The first tranche of the order was approved by the Government in 1989 and is now being manufactured. Further orders are among the highest priorities within BR's corporate plan.

More generally, overcrowding is being addressed through the investment programme, which is running at about £1 million a day on Network SouthEast alone and is due to continue at this level. Much of the expenditure is already authorised by the Government and much of the investment is already under way. Timing of achievement of the train loading standards will depend on factors such as the capacity of the manufacturing industry, the size of the investment programme that can be managed effectively, and changes in demand for rail services and patterns of demand growth.

British Rail's top priority is safety. Railways are already one of the safest means of transport, and British Rail is working to develop an even stronger safety culture throughout the organisation. The board has undertaken a comprehensive review of all safety procedures and training.

Finally, I should like to assure the House that there is no financial constraint on necessary and cost-effective safety expenditure. Last July, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) announced a further increase in British Rail's external financing limit for 1990-91, which allows the board to spend £70 million on safety expenditure in this year alone. This year's PSO grant was also increased, largely to take account of additional safety expenditure. In our public expenditure plans for the next three years, we have endorsed in full British Rail's planned expenditure of some £330 million on additional safety measures. There is no question of improving efficiency at the expense of safety. Nor is there any lack of investment, with railway investment now at its highest level for 30 years and a further increase planned for the next three years.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. On behalf of the Opposition, I offer the deepest sympathy to the relatives and friends of the man who was killed and to all those who were injured in the terrible tragedy at Cannon Street station last Tuesday morning.

As in recent and terrible tragedies—King's Cross, Clapham and Purley—we record yet again our greatest admiration for our emergency services, which appear always to exceed what we can expect from them. There is no doubt that the work of the emergency services in responding so swiftly and acting so promptly with such skill and courage in the most difficult circumstances saved lives. Once again, the House and the entire nation will admire their sheer professionalism and dedication. We are eternally indebted to them.

Does the Secretary of State accept that, although historically rail safety has been at a high level and an increasing one, in recent years safety standards have been falling? In comparing the first half of the 1980s with the second half, we see that general train accidents—this is according to the railway inspectorate's report—have increased by more than 20 per cent. Collisions with buffers —this is relevant to the Cannon Street tragedy—have increased by 30 per cent. I recognise that the inspectorate's report states that there has been a fall in significant railway accidents, but that information is incorrectly presented. That was confirmed by the inspectorate this morning. I hope that the Secretary of State will discuss with the Health and Safety Executive an accurate method of presenting railway safety statistics so that there is no disagreement between us about the facts.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the excessive number of injuries at Cannon Street last week was influenced by overcrowding? The Hidden report stated that those standing in railway carriages were at no greater risk than those seated, but the reality is that the greater the number of passengers on a train the greater is the possibility of serious injury. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that Mr. Hidden was concerned about the safety of standing passengers and that his report contained the recommendation that in carriages of the sort that were involved in the Cannon Street tragedy no more than 10 per cent. of passengers should be standing? With that sort of rolling stock, that means that no more than 16 passengers should be standing in each coach .

I conducted a survey last Wednesday and another one this morning between 7.30 and 9 am. The results of this morning's survey showed that on six separate journeys between Cannon Street and London Bridge this morning there were over 120 passengers standing in each carriage and not the 16 as recommended in the Hidden report. Does the Secretary of State accept that the British Railways Board assured the House and the Department of Transport on 20 August 1990 in a written statement that the recommendation concerning overcrowding had already been implemented? That misled the House, and that has been demonstrated by my surveys and by the daily experience of thousands of people. I drew that to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's attention when we met last Wednesday. Will he inform the House of the explanation that British Rail has given for the deception?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the rolling stock that was involved in the crash at Cannon Street was over 40 years old and that some of the stock that continues to come into Cannon Street on the route in question is over 65 years old? Indeed, the age profile of Network SouthEast's stock is the oldest of any regional network in the United Kingdom or, indeed, in the world. That is the direct result of an inadequate Networker replacement investment programme. There can be no other explanation.

Does the Secretary of State realise that the average age of Network SouthEast's rolling stock is twice that of the stock of the northern region? That is primarily because the financial arrangements affecting British Rail allow the northern regions, through their passenger transport authorities, a subsidy of nearly £100 million a year to replace their rolling stock. That subsidy is denied to the

south-east region. I believe that, if we want safer stock, it is better to replace it as quickly as possible and change the silly rule that subsidies can be given to replace stock in the north but not in the south-east region, which is the most congested network in the United Kingdom. I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will reconsider the rule.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that British Rail proposed in 1986, during the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's inquiry into Network SouthEast, that overcrowding could be reduced—the Department was aware of this in 1986—by lengthening platforms to enable 12-coach Networker trains to be introduced? That would have required extra investment of £200 million, which is equivalent to the amount that the right hon. and learned Gentleman intends to take from the public service obligation tranche for Network SouthEast. Is not this the time for the Secretary of State to reverse that policy so that an emergency programme can be introduced to replace stock and to provide more comfort and safety?

The Secretary of State will have the full support of the House and of the public—particularly as he is new to the job—if he will review the crazy financial framework within which British Rail operates, which forces it to decide projects on the basis of the rate of financial return that they will offer, rather than the quality of safety and service that they will provide. In the past few years, British Rail management has become obsessed with meeting the Government's priority of producing a privatised railway rather than a safe, good-quality railway of the kind that the travelling public want.

Mr. Rifkind: I endorse the hon. Gentleman's initial remarks about the quality of the emergency services and the superb contribution that they made on the occasion in question, as one would have expected.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that British Rail safety standards have fallen in recent years. I cannot support that interpretation. In fact, the total number of fatalities has been falling and last year the number was the lowest since 1983. We naturally hope that that trend will continue.

The hon. Gentleman asked me to review the way in which railway safety statistics are prepared and provided. I shall be happy to consider any specific points that he wishes to make in that respect and see what improvements can be made.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the injuries inflicted on passengers in the Cannon Street incident might have been influenced by the number travelling on the train. There is no evidence as yet that the accident was caused by the number of passengers on the train. However, no doubt the inquiry will consider whether the severity of the injuries and the number of people injured were influenced by that factor. Many of the passengers who were standing in carriages at the time of the impact had been sitting throughout the journey but chose to stand as the train arrived in the station. That often happens on rail journeys, and it is something on which the inquiry may want to comment.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the progress report published by British Rail some time ago which suggested that Hidden's recommendation on overcrowding had been implemented. He was right to draw attention to the inaccuracy of that claim, for it contained at least an ambiguity. British Rail intended to say that it had accepted the need to implement that recommendation, but I agree that the way in which the progress report was written implied that it had already been implemented. That point needs to be corrected.

As to the age of rolling stock and the lack of investment, many take the view that, during the 1970s and in the early 1980s, there was less investment in British Rail under successive Governments than might have been appropriate, but that has changed considerably over the past five or six years. At present, Network SouthEast intends to invest more than £1,300 million over the next three years, which represents a 28 per cent. increase over the past three years. That indicates the priority being given to improvements not just by British Rail as a whole but particularly within Network SouthEast—including modernisation of the rolling stock, which is relevant to the Cannon Street incident.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the way in which proposed investment is appraised has a damaging effect on safety. He ought to be aware that proposed safety expenditure is not subject to the same investment criteria as other investment. When expenditure on safety has been required, British Rail and the Government have an excellent record, which I am happy to defend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the statement relates to the distressing accident at Cannon Street, and that right hon. and hon. Members should not ask questions on wider issues.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): My constituents will be reassured by the Secretary of State's confirmation today that the new Networker rolling stock is still on target for introduction in September 1991.

To put matters in perspective, can my right hon. and learned Friend say what proportion of recent collisions was caused by the use of old rolling stock, how many collisions involved new rolling stock and in how many cases the cause was not clear?

Mr. Rifkind: I can certainly confirm that the Networker programme for Kent inner suburban services, including Sevenoaks, is on schedule. The first 400 vehicles are on order, with delivery due to start in September 1991.

With regard to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question—buffer accidents and the relevance of the age of the stock—it is difficult to draw general conclusions. For example, the House might be interested to know that the provisional details for 1990 for passenger train incidents involving buffer stop collisions suggest that, of the 23 collisions that took place, seven involved old stock that was comparable in age to that in the Cannon Street incident and as many as 10 involved new rolling stock. Details are not yet available for the remaining six collisions. Clearly there can be a number of reasons for accidents of this kind. Sadly, even new rolling stock is not exempted from the risk of incidents of the kind that we have experienced in the past year.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I associate myself with the expressions of sympathy and thanks. Given the apparent figures every day—I looked down from the signal box at London Bridge station three weeks ago—for the number of people standing on trains and for loading the front part of the train with standing passengers, not merely in the last few minutes of the journey, it is not sufficient to wait for technical changes. It

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is necessary for instructions and a change of practice to be implemented soon if injuries are to be minimised. That is a matter of common sense, apart from Sir Anthony Hidden's recommendations.

Also, the Secretary of State could usefully assure the House and the travelling public, first, that the recommendations about the rolling stock being appropriate to reduce the amount of impact damage have been implemented and, secondly, that trains coming into termini have back-up procedures for slowing them down and stopping them, because that was clearly one of the features of this incident.

Mr. Rifkind: I listened with interest to what the hon. Gentleman said. Certainly a significant number of the passengers on the train joined at London Bridge, thereby swelling the numbers for the last, albeit short, stage of the journey. The hon. Gentleman is right to draw our attention to that factor. The design of the rolling stock and its reaction on impact is a technical matter about which the inquiry may wish to make recommendations, and British Rail will clearly be anxious to identify whether improvements can be made. New rolling stock is being introduced on this service, as on all the other services in Network SouthEast, and it will have the benefit of the latest design technology information.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): A number of my constituents are still in hospital recovering from this tragic accident and I wish to extend my sympathy to them, to their relatives and to all others involved in this unhappy situation.

I wish to raise three points with my right hon. and learned Friend. First, are the buffers at Cannon Street station of the same high quality, with the same ability to withstand impact, as those at other London termini? If not, can action be taken to improve them? Secondly, will my right hon. and learned Friend hold urgent talks with the chairman of British Rail on whether the programme to renew rolling stock, which is in hand, can be accelerated? I accept that this accident may not have been directly related to old rolling stock, but there is no doubt that new rolling stock is, as one would expect, safer for passengers in impacts of this kind. Quite apart from the safety factors, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend, in his new job, is fully aware of the low standards of accommodation provided for constituents travelling from this part of south-east England. We are at the end of the programme for renewing rolling stock and I can assure him that if the programme could be accelerated it would have a welcome effect on millions of people.

Finally, can my right hon. and learned Friend give us any idea of how rapidly the initial findings of the inquiry will be made public? I consider it most important that the ritual of inquiry be carried out rapidly and that the public are given information with expediency.

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my hon. Friend for what he has said. I understand that the buffers have virtually been removed by the railway inspectorate so that they can be properly examined, as their design may be significant with regard to the inquiries.

My hon. Friend also asked whether the replacement of rolling stock could be accelerated. Apart from the question of resources, there is the question of the manufacturing capacity of those replacing the stock, but I believe that good progress is being made. At present, over 80 per cent. of the Network SouthEast fleet is either less than 15 years old or refurbished to modern standards. Having said that, however, I agree with my hon. Friend that in some parts of Network SouthEast the quality of rolling stock is less impressive than that in many other parts of the country. That must be addressed, seriously and constructively, within the framework of British Rail's overall requirements.

The hon. Gentleman asked when the findings of the inquiry would be made public. The most important requirement will be for any interim recommendations to be made available to British Rail so that the necessary steps can be taken. The report will be made public in due course, and, as soon as it is available, it will be made public to my hon. Friend and to others interested in these matters.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Has the Secretary of State's attention been drawn to my written question and the answer given, on 15 March 1988, by the then Minister for Public Transport, the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell)? My question, which can be found in column *495* of the *Official Report*, concerned brake failures on multiple unit trains. Is the Secretary of State aware that, in his reply, his hon. Friend said that the matter would be dealt with in the forthcoming report on the Walton-on-Naze accident, which happened on 12 August 1987?

Is not it a fact that that accident occurred when a modern sliding-door multiple unit electric train came into that one-end station at about 50 mph—fortunately with only 12 passengers? Is not it also a fact that the report on the accident has not yet been published, although the accident took place three and a half years ago? If that is not suppression, does not the delay illustrate the fact that the Government are less concerned with safety first than they pretend?

Mr. Rifkind: I am concerned about the fact that the report has not yet been published, but its non-publication is not for the reasons suggested by the hon. Gentleman. The person responsible for drafting it was seconded as an assessor to the Clapham inquiry, and has therefore not finished the drafting.

Mr. Spearing: That is not good enough.

Mr. Rifkind: I am not suggesting that it is good enough; I am explaining the background. I can assure the hon. Gentleman of two things: first, that any lessons to be learnt from that inquiry have already been passed on to British Rail; and, secondly, that the brake that failed in the incident that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned involved an entirely different design from that at Cannon Street. Having said that, let me add that I share his desire to see the report published as soon as possible. I hope that the inspector in question will be able to finish drafting it so that it can be published in the next few weeks or months. As soon as that is done, it will be published.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): My right hon. and learned Friend has accepted the truth of comments made about rolling stock in the south-east. Does he realise that commuters from the Medway towns stand throughout their journey every morning? There is no question of their standing merely from London Bridge to Cannon Street.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend himself investigate the claim that manufacturers would not be able to accelerate the provision of rolling stock? Surely, during a period of recession, we can expect manufacturers to expedite its provision.

Mr. Rifkind: A number of factors have to be taken into account, but my hon. Friend will be pleased to know that, in addition to the 400 vehicles already on order, with delivery due to start in September next, the project also includes £120 million of fixed works programmes, with platform lengthening at 63 stations out of Cannon Street and Charing Cross. That implies the approval of over 400 additional vehicles to complete the replacement of the current fleet and to cater for growth in demand.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Is the Secretary of State aware that during the last 15 years hon. Members have been given assurances by successive chairmen of British Rail that all the outdated rolling stock on Network SouthEast would be replaced? However, Kent suburban routes are still operating with single compartment, non-corridor coaches that date back to before world war two. In view of our past disappointments, is the Secretary of State able to say clearly whether he has a target date for the replacement of all outdated rolling stock on Network SouthEast? If he has, what, please, is it?

Mr. Rifkind: I said earlier that it could be argued that there was insufficient investment in the railways in the 1970s and the early 1980s. I am happy to say that during the last five or six years there has been a significant change and that there will continue to be change in the right direction. Since 1985, the average age of the Network SouthEast fleet has been reduced from 24 to 19 years. We expect the age of the fleet to continue to be reduced and we hope that all the older stock will be replaced within a reasonable period. Substantial progress is being made. The investment resources available to Network SouthEast alone are of a very high order—£1·3 billion over the next three years. That is not a small sum of money by any standards.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Unhappily, a number of my constituents were involved in the crash. I know that both they and their families wish to endorse the comments that have been made about the prompt and efficient reaction of the emergency services. Thousands of my constituents use the services to London Bridge, Charing Cross and Cannon Street every day, as do both I and members of my family.

There was considerable concern when my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor announced the phasing out of the public service obligation grant. It was felt that it would lead to substantial fare increases and to economies that might affect safety standards. My right hon. and learned Friend will understand if last week both of those fears appeared to have been realised. Will he reconsider the phasing out of the public service obligation grant?

I endorse the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) about the inquiry. Most of us were under the impression that the purpose of a buffer was to do precisely what its name implies: to absorb the impact if a train fails to come to a complete stop. In this case, that does not seem to have happened. One therefore has to question whether the buffers were up to the job.

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, he is right to draw attention to the apparent failure of the buffers to do the job for which they were designed. The inquiry will wish to consider that point.

The point that I wish to emphasise most regarding the public service obligation grant is that whether it goes up or down is not relevant to the question of safety. That is determined by quite different considerations. My hon. Friend may have noticed that, in yesterday's edition of the *Observer*, British Rail's safety director, Mr. Maurice Holmes, was quoted as saying:

> "We have not been refused money for any essential safety scheme. Where we are not progressing as fast as we would like, the obstacles have been practical ones."

My hon. Friend can therefore rest assured that the Government have always given the greatest priority to safety expenditure, on both Network SouthEast and other sectors of the rail network.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Will the Secretary of State accept from me that this accident has increased the widespread unease among our constituents about the decrepit, antiquated and often squalid state of the railways in London and the south-east? That unease was exacerbated when they heard of the impossible hours being worked by engineers, as revealed at the Clapham inquiry. Does he accept that the policy of eliminating public subsidy to the railways is crazily mistaken and that until it is altered the public will not believe that profit is not being put before service and safety?

Mr. Rifkind: We are conscious of the need to ensure that those who carry out tasks on the rail network are not put under strain or are expected to work unnecessary hours. Overtime has been reduced and British Rail hopes to make further progress on that matter. The hon. Gentleman's point is well understood.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. and learned Friend was right to highlight the number of people who changed trains at London Bridge for the last half mile into Cannon Street. A number of those who did so would have been my constituents who travel from Rainham, which is one of the busiest commuter stations in south-east England. The people of Rainham, who pay about £1,500 a year for the privilege of standing all the way into London every day, are dismayed by the deferment to 1995 of the Networker trains for the outer suburban lines to my constituency and beyond. Will my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that the original programme will be reinstated as soon as possible so that they can expect the Networker trains at the same time as other commuters in Kent?

Mr. Rifkind: I shall refer my hon. Friend's point to British Rail when I am next in contact with it to ascertain its view on the matter. There are a number of demands on British Rail's investment programme. The Government have initiated the largest investment programme in British Rail for no less than 30 years, which should ensure substantial improvements to the benefit of my hon. Friend's constituents and to those of hon. Members from other parts of the country.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As a Scot, is not the right hon. and learned Gentleman impressed by the amount of all-party anger in the south-east about the way in which our commuters are treated when they travel on British Rail? Although we understand that we must await the outcome of the inquiry, does he seriously expect us to believe that there is no connection between the age of the rolling stock and the amount of carnage and injury that appears to have resulted from a train hitting the buffers at 5 mph? Will he give us an assurance that all rolling stock of that vintage will be taken out of service while immediate investigations and examinations are made to ensure that nothing similar occurs? Although that might result in some dislocation, it is far better to be temporarily dislocated than long-term impaired.

Mr. Rifkind: I assure the hon. Gentleman that if any rolling stock is considered to be unsafe, whatever its age and however modern or old, it is immediately withdrawn from service. That is the criterion that should be applied. The design of the rolling stock may be relevant to the nature of the injuries that were caused, but we have no reason to believe that its age was a contributory cause of the accident. Those matters will be examined by the inspectorate in its inquiry. Its views will be made public and if there is any contrary evidence it will have to be fully considered and presented, not just to the inspectorate but to the public as a whole.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Thousands of my constituents stand on the trains every day. They find it almost incomprehensible that they should be charged the same as for sitting. At various airports, the buses that meet aircraft are designed to enable people to stand in safety and comfort. Is it beyond the wit of British Rail to ensure a system whereby there is a difference in the fare charged for those who sit and those who stand, and that some of the rolling stock is designed for people to be able to stand in comfort? As that is what they will always have to do, why cannot they do it in safety and comfort?

Mr. Rifkind: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion, but normally an airline knows in advance how many passengers it will carry. It knows that from the moment that the journey begins, whereas there is some unpredictability for railway services. I shall draw my hon. Friend's point to British Rail's attention.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Although the Secretary of State makes great play of the permission to borrow money to deal with safety, he ignores the fact that safety is made up of many different factors, such as the pressure caused by the closure of maintenance depots, the pressure on men to work long hours and the pressure on people who are crushed into wholly inadequate rolling stock. All those factors contribute to accidents. Will he guarantee that the position will change within the next two years? Companies are capable of building whatever rolling stock is necessary; and until the Government sold them off they were highly efficient.

Mr. Rifkind: I have already informed the House that we have the highest investment programme for over 30 years. The fact that I am able to say that indicates that the performance of the Labour Government in investing in the railways was not impressive.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I represent a constituency in which up to half of the working population commutes to London every day? A crash such as last week's increases people's apprehensions considerably and those apprehensions have been played upon. Will my right hon. and learned Friend accentuate the fact that a reduction in operating subsidies does not have an impact on capital investment or on safety? He has told the House that capital investment is the highest on record and that the safety recommendations in the Hidden report have been met in full.

My right hon. and learned Friend is new to his job and therefore may not be fully aware of the resentment felt in Kent that we are the last in the queue for the introduction of the Networkers. Will he take seriously the recommendation of my hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) and get a move on so that we can have the Networkers even earlier than September?

Mr. Rifkind: I note the point that my hon. Friend fairly makes. Any reduction in the operating subsidy releases resources for investment. Therefore, the investment programme is positively helped when fewer resources are required for operating purposes.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The obsolescence of the rolling stock may not have contributed to the accident, but it certainly contributed to the injuries. Those of us who regularly travel on the Kent suburban lines know from reports of earlier accidents that the rolling stock simply splinters on impact. It is grossly unsafe. Is not it true that the Government have done nothing in the past decade to improve safety on those lines, tackle overcrowding or invest in new rolling stock?

Mr. Rifkind: That is simply untrue. I accept the hon. Gentleman's remark that the design of the train might have contributed to the nature of the injuries. Clearly the inquiry will comment on that, and we shall consider with great interest what it says. However, the suggestion that nothing has been done about safety flies in the face of the evidence. We have endorsed £330 million of additional expenditure on safety over the next three years. During the past decade the Government have not refused permission for expenditure on any safety proposal by British Rail. The hon. Gentleman must be a little more objective in such matters.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): My right hon. and learned Friend is aware of and sympathises with the anxieties of travellers on, for example, the north Kent line about the conditions in which they travel. He will be aware that events such as last week's accident heighten the anxieties not only of travellers but of their families, the apprehension with which people travel every day and fears for their safety. When my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Public Transport makes his most welcome visit to Margate in the spring to launch the exhibition of the new rolling stock, will he be in a position to assure my constituents that neither they nor the Government will have to tolerate any delay in the introduction of the new rolling stock to the further regions of the north Kent line?

Mr. Rifkind: I note carefully what my hon. Friend says. Of course, we shall do what we can to ensure that progress in replacing the rolling stock will continue so that the more acceptable situation which my hon. Friend desires will come about as soon as possible.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Is the Secretary of State aware that the rolling stock on the further reaches of the north Kent line previously consisted of four-abreast seating in open compartments with plenty of leg room and that the new rolling stock will be five abreast with space for the knees available only by slotting the knees into a hole in the back of the seat in front? Does he consider that the new configuration is more or less comfortable? Does he believe that such a sardine-like arrangement is safe?

Mr. Rifkind: I would have to try it out before it would be safe to venture an opinion on its relative merits compared with the older design. Clearly the comfort of the travelling public is an important consideration. I hope that, in designing new rolling stock, British Rail will seek to improve the comfort of passengers rather than reduce it. I will draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of British Rail.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my right hon. and learned Friend take every opportunity to reassure the travelling public that, despite terrible incidents such as the one at Cannon Street and the one two years ago at Clapham Junction in my constituency, it is safe to travel by train and that they should continue to use the service with confidence? Will he ask the inquiry and/or British Rail to look into two aspects regarding standing on trains? First, what would the impact have been in this instance had the train been one of the many trains on Network SouthEast that travel with half the number of coaches which they should have, but with the same number of passengers packed into the reduced number of coaches? Secondly, should it be more of an enforceable offence to open train doors while the train is still in motion? That is a danger to the public on the platform and encourages more people to stand up as the train approaches the platform.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope that the inspectorate will consider each of my hon. Friend's points, which may be relevant to the safety of the travelling public. He is certainly right to emphasise that the railways continue to be one of the safest means of travel. Earlier I mentioned the number of fatalities on the railways—some 60 people killed during the year compared with more than 5,000 on the roads. Therefore, the railways remain one of the safest means of transport in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to recognise the splendid work of our train drivers in difficult and, sometimes, dangerous conditions for little reward? As he seems to have ruled out the possibility of the age of the rolling stock having caused the accident at Cannon Street, will he assure us that the train driver will not be used as a scapegoat for British Rail's inadequacies, as has happened in the past?

Mr. Rifkind: I am happy to pay tribute to railway drivers as a whole who perform a valuable service for the travelling public. I will not speculate on the cause of the accident. Whether there were mechanical, human or other reasons will be for the inspectorate to draw to the attention of British Rail and the public in its conclusions.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I trust that my right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that I wrote to him shortly after his appointment to express concern about the delays in implementing the new rolling stock in Kent generally, and that he will do all in his power to speed up the programme, which is wholly unsatisfactory. Many trains in Kent are cancelled because of the inadequacies of the rolling stock. Often there are failings, whether with brakes or other parts, and, as a result, trains must be withdrawn from service. Alternatively, trains are delayed or temporarily taken out of service while repairs are effected on the spot. In these circumstances, the inquiry must reassure our constituents and Kent commuters as soon as possible that the carriages in service are safe. To alleviate all the anxieties expressed today, can we speed up the programme for the replacement of these awful old carriages?

Mr. Rifkind: I am concerned by the great dissatisfaction among my hon. Friends, other hon. Members and their constituents who use these services. It is a source of encouragement that Network SouthEast has embarked on a massive reinvestment programme. Inevitably it takes a little time to see the results of reinvestment. The sums invested in the production of new rolling stock in Kent and elsewhere in the south-east are of an enormous and almost unprecedented order. Therefore, my hon. Friend's constituents can look forward to a more acceptable and satisfactory service in the years to come.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Can the Minister tell us by what factor the longitudinal crushing strength of the modern stock will be increased over the stock involved in the accident? Does he intend to introduce inter-city type energy-absorbing buffers at terminal stations throughout the InterCity region where they are needed instead of the lighter type, which are less effective and which were involved in the accident?

The right hon. and learned Gentleman should understand that, even though the accident occurred in London, it sent the message to all commuters throughout England, Scotland and Wales who suffer from overcrowding that there is potential for accidents when trains are massively overcrowded. All commuter services on British Rail are now overcrowded, but the Government have not taken sufficient action soon enough to remedy it. We need more trains—with more seats—that run more frequently to meet demand. We know that some of the figures on investment are economical with the truth, and I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman can present us with investment figures that ensure that coaches start appearing in London, the south-east and the rest of the nation.

Mr. Rifkind: Coaches are appearing. In recent years ever-increasing numbers of new rolling stock have appeared throughout the United Kingdom.

The early part of the hon. Gentleman's question referred to the design of buffers and the rolling stock, which are clearly matters for British Rail to consider. I hope that it will take into account any recommendations made by the inquiry and by previous inquiries when considering the future design of buffers and rolling stock.

Orders of the Day

Severn Bridges Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.41 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill is intended to authorise the provision of a second tolled road bridge over the Severn estuary between England and Wales, and of the road links needed to connect it to the existing motorway network. It also provides the necessary framework to enable the new bridge to be privately financed through a concession agreement between the Secretary of State and a private concessionaire.

The scheme embodied in the Bill is important, first, because of the long-awaited improvement in communications that the new bridge will provide between England and Wales, and, secondly, because it represents a further significant development of the Government's policy of encouraging the fullest participation by the private sector in providing the country's transport infrastructure. Before I describe in detail the background and content of the Bill, I should like to set the scene in terms of that wider initiative.

The Channel tunnel was the original inspiration and that was followed quickly by the success of a privately funded proposal for the Dartford-Thurrock bridge. I have recently been to see work on that bridge and I commend not only the contractors responsible but the local authorities that were previously involved in providing services for the speed of implementation of the construction work. The bridge is progressing well and will be open to traffic this autumn—the first major highway project in Britain in modern times to have been financed and built by the private sector. The next such scheme is, of course, the second Severn crossing, the Bill for which we are dealing with.

Looking to the future, we are assessing the tenders received for the Birmingham northern relief road, and are considering proposals for new road capacity to meet the longer-term needs of the Birmingham to Manchester corridor. We have also been consulting on six further schemes as possible candidates for private finance to which the industry has responded very encouragingly. In Scotland, bids are being considered for the Skye bridge and there is much interest being shown in the proposal for a privately financed link between the A74 and M8. That is, by the very nature of road construction, a long-term policy.

I am, therefore delighted to report that so much has been achieved in such a short time and that the private sector is responding so positively to the challenge. What is crucially new about this policy lies in the creation of a commercial link between the demands of road users and the provision that will meet that demand. Private firms will be able, subject to appropriate safeguards, to build new roads where they have identified that road users need the new capacity or will gain from shorter journey times. In other words, we are extending the advantages and disciplines of the market further into transport provision. That is in the long-term interests of road users themselves and of the economy at large.

The House will, of course, know that the New Roads and Street Works Bill, which has been introduced in another place, includes proposals for new procedures for the authorisation of tolled roads without the need for the present hybrid Bill procedures. Those proposals are aimed specifically to facilitate the involvement of private promoters in future road schemes. They would enable privately funded toll roads to be authorised in the same way as conventional trunk roads are now, under the procedures laid down in the Highways Act 1980—after public inquiry and subsequent orders made by the relevant Ministers. I should, therefore, explain to the House why we are asking Parliament separately for the powers set out in the Severn Bridges Bill rather than relying on the new powers that the New Roads and Street Works Bill would offer.

There are, essentially, two reasons. First, the scheme for the second Severn bridge involves—as I shall explain later—the repeal and replacement of the legislation that authorises the tolling of the existing Severn bridge in order to provide a common tolling and operating regime for both bridges. To do this, a separate Bill would have been necessary in any case, but to try to seek powers for the scheme partly through a Bill, and partly through the new order-making procedures, would have made no sense. It would have been merely a recipe for delay and inconsistency.

It follows that the second key reason for seeking all the necessary powers in the Bill is to enable the provision of the new bridge to go ahead as quickly as possible. The only practical alternative, of a limited hybrid Bill followed by the initiation of the order-making process, would almost certainly mean at least a year's delay. As it is, we hope —subject, obviously, to the outcome of the consideration of the Bill by this House and elsewhere—that construction of the new bridge can start next winter, with completion around the end of 1995.

The existing Severn bridge was opened in 1966, 25 years ago, and throughout that period has provided the main road link between south Wales and England, as part of the M4. As such, it has assumed a crucial importance for the economy of the area, especially perhaps in the Principality. As a result, the bridge, which now carries an average of more than 50,000 vehicles a day, has increasingly in recent years become a victim of its own success. Congestion is now becoming a regular event at peak times of the day and at holiday weekends. That is essentially due to sheer lack of capacity at the bridge—which has only two traffic lanes in each direction—rather than to the transient delays incurred by the collection of tolls. The problems have also been complicated by the need to strengthen the bridge to enable it to carry the amount of modern traffic which now uses it, but which was unforeseen at the time it was designed. In addition, high winds can require restrictions on the use of the bridge by high-sided vehicles and the lack of a full hard shoulder exacerbates the difficulties caused by breakdowns and accidents.

Given those developments, the Government decided in 1986 to begin preparations for a second road crossing of the estuary. Following earlier extensive feasibility studies, it was concluded that the optimum choice for such a crossing would be a bridge across the English Stones, some three miles downstream of the present bridge. After

further preparatory work, preliminary bids to provide the new bridge were invited in December 1988. In the light of the successful outcome of the competition to provide the third Dartford-Thurrock crossing, bidders were asked to submit proposals both for a privately funded scheme and for a conventional, publicly financed one: in other words, a scheme involving design, financing, construction and maintenance by the private sector or the more conventional route whereby there is competition between contractors for the design and construction of the bridge.

Eight would-be promoters responded and a shortlist of four was invited in April 1989 to submit detailed tenders, again on both private and public finance bases. After an intensive evaluation of the ensuing proposals, the Government decided that the privately funded bid from a consortium formed by John Laing and GTM-Entrepose offered the best overall value for money of all the proposals submitted. It also offered the way ahead to the earliest practicable date for the completion of the new bridge, which, as I have already said, could be around the end of 1995. The provisional award of the concession to the consortium—Severn River Crossing plc—was announced last April. That was followed up on 29 October 1990 by the formal signature of a concession agreement with the company. The financing of the consortium includes up to £150 million from the European investment bank. Copies of the agreement were placed in the House Library before Christmas. Whether or not that concession agreement comes into effect depends on approval of the Bill, which is now before the House and will shortly be before another place.

In parallel with the competition to provide the new bridge, work continued on the development of the design of the motorway links that are intended to connect it to the existing network. Those roads would be provided under separate, publicly funded contracts to be arranged in the usual way by the Department of Transport for the link roads in Avon to the M4 and M5 and by the Welsh Office for the link road in Gwent to the M4. The two roads in Avon would be to dual two-lane motorway standard—thus providing four lanes each way in total—and the road in Gwent would be to dual three-lane motorway standard, matching the provision on the new bridge.

At each stage of the development of those proposals there has been extensive local consultation on all aspects of the proposed new roads——

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to clause 31. While congratulating my hon. Friend, his Department and its officials on the detailed and largely successful negotiations they have had with the Gloucester Harbour Trustees, the British Waterways Association and others, may I ask my hon. Friend to confirm that when making the regulations he will bear it in mind that ships of up to 10,000 tonnes dead weight currently use the port of Sharpness in my constituency? If the regulations referred to a figure lower than 10,000 tonnes, that could have an adverse effect on the port.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is certainly not the intention of the Department of Transport or the Welsh Office to frustrate shipping already using the estuary. I am aware that ships of up to 10,000 tonnes dead weight already use the estuary and port in his constituency. We have no intention of preventing that. I assure him that the Department——

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Freeman: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene? I did not quite hear what he said.

Mr. Morgan: I just wanted to tell the Minister that if he had forgotten the name of the port in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), which he appeared to have done, it was Sharpness.

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I had not forgotten the name. The point I was making applies not only to the port in my hon. Friend's constituency but to all ports on the estuary up river from the proposed bridge. I am assuring not only my hon. Friend, but the whole House, that the Bill does not attempt to frustrate any shipping currently using the River Severn. We shall continue to consult not only with the Gloucester Harbour Trustees and the British Waterways Association, but with all other organisations that have a legitimate interest not only in shipping but in wildlife and other amenities on the River Severn. All is not lost. I understand what my hon. Friend said and I hope that he is satisfied with that response.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The Minister referred to the fact that the access roads will be publicly funded. Those roads are an integral part of the scheme. Will he explain the logic in saying that the access roads, which are provided purely to get to and from the bridge, will be provided at public expense, but the profit from the toll on the bridge will go to a private firm? Will he explain why he differentiated between them in that way?

Mr. Freeman: I shall try. The road construction programme, which amounts to about £200 million, will provide the access roads, use of which will not be tolled, but the bridge——

Mr. Alan Williams: The roads will not be going anywhere.

Mr. Freeman: The right hon. Gentleman says that the roads are not going anywhere, but that could also apply to traffic using the M4, M5 or the roads in Wales. All the access roads are untolled and there is no provision to toll them. There were two stages in the Department's consideration of how the bridge should be built, financed and operated. The first stage was to carry out a competitive bidding procedure. The John Laing consortium was chosen as it offered the best possible deal for the motorist, because the lowest total volume—calculated by the number of tolls and the number of vehicles using the bridge—would be charged. The consortium required the lowest revenue payback. We then compared the winning tenderer, Laing, with the other option—the Department building the bridge and its being tolled as the first bridge is at present. We calculated that it was in the taxpayers' best interests for the private sector consortium bid to proceed. Although the consortium has to earn profits, which are taxed and the revenues then flow to the Government, the extra cost incurred and the slightly longer period in which the motorist would have to pay tolls in order that the expenses of the successful tenderer could be recovered are outweighed by the advantage to the

[Mr. Freeman]

taxpayer of placing the risk of cost overrun—not only the cost of the bridge, but operating and maintaining it throughout its life—firmly on the private sector consortium without the risk to the taxpayer. Therefore, we decided that that option provided the best value for money for the taxpayer and the motorist.

Mr. Alan Williams: The Minister has explained why the contract was allocated on that basis, but he has still not answered my question. We are talking about multi-lane carriageways leading nowhere other than the bridge—they would be cul-de-sacs if they did not go to the bridge. All I am asking is, if the Government say that the bridge should be privately funded, what is the logic of saying that the taxpayer should meet the cost of the feeder roads? It should be all or nothing—an option in between does not make sense.

Mr. Freeman: I see the logic of the right hon. Gentleman's argument. We are not departing from the present position, where the estuarial crossing on the present bridge is tolled, not the feeder roads. The right hon. Gentleman raises the prospect of changing the basis of financing so that tolls are imposed on feeder roads. There is no reason in principle why that option should not apply, but the Government have decided that in this instance it is better for them to fund the road construction part of the project and permit the construction, operational and maintenance costs of the bridge to be recovered from tolls, as at present.

At each stage of the development of these proposals there has been extensive local consultation on all aspects of the proposed new roads, including their effect on the environment. In particular, three series of local exhibitions have been held over the past three years, at several venues on both sides of the estuary, to show the developing scheme and to provide all concerned with a full opportunity to comment at each stage.

As part of this process, a substantial number of alternative routes for the approach roads have been examined and carefully evaluated. The Department's preferred routes have been significantly amended and refined over the period to take account of this work and of the comments that have been received. While recognising that we are never going to be able to satisfy everybody that we have made the best choice of route, I am confident that the final choice—as embodied in the Bill's proposals—represents the best practicable balance between all the conflicting interests at stake.

In the same vein, I should also stress that we fully recognise the environmental sensitivity of this location. The part of the estuary to be crossed by the new bridge is of considerable ecological interest, particularly as a habitat for wildfowl, and it has been designated as part of a site of special scientific interest. There are also proposals to designate the estuary as both a special protection area for birds, under EC legislation, and as a wetland of international importance for birds under the Ramsar convention. The Department has, therefore, taken great pains to ensure that the effects of the new bridge on the ecology of the estuary will be minimised.

We hope that the bridge will make a very positive contribution to the landscape of the area. It will be a most impressive structure both in engineering and aesthetic terms; on the latter count, the Royal Fine Art Commission has been consulted at a number of stages in the development of the design, and has indicated that it finds the outcome acceptable.

The concession agreement with Severn River Crossing incorporates exacting requirements set by the Department to meet the environmental concerns and sets out the details of comprehensive proposals to meet those requirements in full.

Environmental factors of a different kind are equally important on land. Careful account has been taken in the development of the proposals of another site of special scientific interest on the Welsh bank of the estuary, where the flora and fauna are of particular interest. In terms of the effect on people, the aim, in developing the proposals for the connecting motorways, has been to minimise as far as practicable the impact on the local environment and on local communities. That applies both for the period of construction, for which we are proposing wherever possible to keep the inevitable heavy construction traffic away from local centres of population, and for the completed roads themselves, where the aim has been to minimise their visual impact and the severance to local communities. That will be achieved by careful choice of the line and level of the new roads, by the provision of alternatives for local roads and footpaths affected by the scheme, and by extensive landscaping.

A detailed and comprehensive environmental statement has been prepared in parallel with the Bill to explain all the environmental considerations affecting the scheme and the full extent of the work that has been done to ensure that there is the minimum adverse impact. Copies are in the House Library. Although the EC directive on environmental assessment does not apply to schemes authorised by Parliament, the environmental statement meets the requirements of the directive.

The House will, I hope, find it helpful if I now turn to the Bill and give an explanation of its structure and contents.

The Bill falls into three main parts. Of these, part I would provide the necessary powers for the construction of the new bridge and the connecting roads, and other associated works. Part II deals with the arrangements for the operation and management both of the new bridge, following its completion, and the existing bridge. It includes provision for a new tolling regime for the two bridges. Part III covers a range of miscellaneous items not dealt with by the first two parts.

Part I comprises clauses 1 to 3, which each correspond with a schedule of the same number setting out the associated detailed provisions for each element of the scheme. In essence, these provisions would enable the construction of each element of the works, within specified limits; they would empower the acquisition of the necessary land; and they would permit the alterations to the existing highway network required as a consequence of the main works.

Part II, which deals with the operation of both bridges, contains the key provisions enabling the Secretary of State to enter into a concession agreement with a private promoter for the design, building, financing and operation of the new bridge, and for taking over the financing and operation of the existing one. As I have said, a concession agreement has already been entered into, with the Severn River Crossing company. That agreement is, of course,

conditional upon the successful passage of the Bill, and would not have full effect until and unless the Bill receives Royal Assent.

Much of part II—clauses 5 to 14—is taken up with the provisions needed to implement a new tolling regime for the bridges. That would take effect, initially only at the existing Severn bridge, on a day to be appointed by the Secretary of State after Royal Assent. The intention is that it would be the starting date for the concession period, on which the concessionaire would simultaneously take over responsibility for the finances and operation of the existing bridge and be able to begin construction of the new bridge.

In part because of the possibility—we hope very remote—that the concession agreement will not be able to take effect on that date, the Bill is structured to provide that the basic power to levy tolls is granted to the Secretary of State, rather than directly to the concessionaire. That power may then in turn be conferred on and exercised by the concessionaire, under appropriate conditions.

The tolls to be levied under the Bill would be set on the same principles, whether it is the Secretary of State or the concessionaire who is levying them. The tolls, which in the normal run of events would be charged only on traffic heading in the westbound direction—that would reduce both operating costs and the disruption to traffic—would be fixed on the basis of the figures in the table in clause 9, indexed in line with the retail prices index.

Mr. Morgan: The Minister will be aware that this country entered the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system a few months ago, since when certain Ministers have been trying to persuade employers and employees to forget all about the retail prices index when they negotiate wages. Would not it be helpful if the Government also forgot all about the RPI and found some more composite, more ERM and EMS-related index? It will be difficult for employees on the construction project if they are exhorted to forget about the RPI when negotiating wage increases when they can see that it has been included in the basis for the annual increase in tolls. Can anything be done to resolve that problem?

Mr. Freeman: The provision in the Bill protects the public because it sets a cap on the yearly increase in tolls, and the RPI is a fairly general and satisfactory measure of the pressures faced by the general motoring public. Furthermore, its inclusion does not weight the rise in the operating costs of the bridge. Any wage increases conceded by the concessionaire would constitute only a very small proportion of the total RPI for the country, so a satisfactory balance has been struck. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman will be called in the debate, but I am sure that he will have a subsequent opportunity to suggest an alternative measure of protection. We believe it to be in the interests of the constituents of all hon. Members that there should be a price cap on the rate of increase of tolls—because the crossing is essentially a monopoly.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Why does not the Minister implement on the present Severn crossing the useful and sensible saving that could be derived from collecting tolls only one way? Many hon. Members suggested that at many inquiries and I suggested it again a few months ago in a parliamentary question.

Mr. Freeman: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is intended for both bridges. Changing the present tolling regime would require the approval of the House, so there is nothing that we can do until Parliament has approved the change. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that, when approval is given in six, 12 or 18 months' time—once Royal Assent has been given to this measure—there should be only westward tolling on the present bridge, he has a strong point, which I shall draw to the attention of the concessionaire.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Are we to take it from what the Minister has just said in general reference to clause 9 that the toll will not rise from £1 to £2·35 as set out in the table for 1992 until there is one-way tolling only? Can he assure the House that the toll will not be raised to £2·35 or anything like it while two-way tolling continues?

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

We do not seek to hide the fact that these tolls would represent a significant increase over existing levels. The initial car toll for 1992 would mean a cash increase, depending on the RPI, of the order of 40 to 45 per cent. over present levels for a round trip over the bridge. In real terms, the increase would be about one third over current levels. Larger vehicles would face more substantial increases. But the real point is that the new bridge must be paid for. These tolls represent a very reasonable price to pay for the provision of about £300 million worth of new bridge, which will more than double the capacity of this vital road link, and provide the benefits of shorter journey times and the minimisation of disruption from bad weather.

The Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965, which the Bill would repeal, provides for tolling for a period of up to 40 years from opening of the present bridge, in other words, until the year 2006. Under the Bill, which provides for tolling to cover not only the cost of the new bridge but the outstanding deficit of some £120 million on the existing bridge, the concessionaire is permitted a maximum of 30 years' tolling.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Will the Minister enlighten us on the method of increasing toll charges? We know about the procedure that is followed under the 1965 Act, but now it seems that a great deal of power will be vested in the concessionaire. What is the Minister's role in this matter and will hon. Members be able to vote on it? I understand that local authorities will no longer be able to have a public inquiry about objections to the proposals, and certainly not about proposals with regard to the retail prices index. Can the Minister enlighten us?

Mr. Freeman: I shall try. There is an application for judicial review of the recent increase on the present bridge to a charge of £2 round trip per car. The hon. Gentleman would not expect me to comment on that. However, if, after the second bridge is opened, the concessionaire increases the tolls by no more than the retail prices index—and the matter will be monitored by my Department—there is no mechanism for objecting to or controlling such an increase. In due course, the hon. Gentleman will have a chance to study some of the more detailed clauses that provide in certain circumstances for the tolls to be increased by more than the RPI. There may be certain reasons for that, and my recollection is that an affirmative order would need to be placed before the

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House, voted on and approved by both Houses. If the concessionaire simply sticks to RPI increases, the procedure would be automatic, in the same way as hon. Members' salaries are indexed to movements in civil service salary levels and do not come before the House each year.

Mr. Alan Williams: That was a helpful and clear answer. Will the Minister explain how he arrived at such a proposition and tell us the relevance of the retail prices index to the cost of the bridge? The RPI measures the change in the cost of living of the average family. As has been said, the Government have been lecturing people and saying that the RPI is wrong and that we should look at core inflation, which is substantially lower than RPI rises. However, even core inflation is not relevant to an operation that will consist almost entirely of capital costs, which are interest related. Why on earth has this rabbit of RPI been produced as relevant to the method of increasing the toll?

Mr. Freeman: I look forward to debating that at some length. I shall try to give as rational an explanation as possible, because I understand the right hon. Gentleman's concern. Perhaps he thinks that we should substitute for the RPI the actual increases in the concessionaire's costs, but that would trap him into losing the benefit of the protection to the travelling public that is enshrined in the Bill. What happens if the concessionaire's costs for maintenance, operation and even interest rates rise at a rate faster than the RPI? Does the right hon. Gentleman suggest that the travelling public should be subjected to increases that may be much greater than the RPI? If he looks at the construction industry index and combines it with movements in interest rates, he will find that that is what has happened in the past.

Mr. Alan Williams: I should welcome that as an alternative, because running costs measured by labour costs and so on, to which the Minister referred, will be minuscule compared with the capital costs. If increases are based on operating costs, rather than the RPI, the people who use the bridge will be infinitely better off. Contrary to what the Minister said earlier, £52·2 million of the £52·5 million from toll payers relates to original design faults at the time of bridge construction. In addition to questions about the RPI, who will meet the costs of any design faults? On the present bridge they cost £50 million.

Mr. Freeman: The right hon. Gentleman talks about design faults. I hope that he does not mean faults in terms of safety but faults in terms of cost overrun. The costs of those are met entirely by the concessionaire and not by the taxpayer, as would be the case if the bridge were to be financed in the conventional way. We are getting into the detail of one of the Bill's provisions. The Government believe that the best protection for the travelling public is the use of the RPI index because it can be related most fairly to the likely trend of annual revenue costs falling on the operator who also maintains the bridge. It has nothing to do with the construction costs, because, once the bridge is open, the cost of the bridge is fixed. Any cost overruns are the responsibility of the concessionaire.

The concessionaire's tolling period is perhaps 20 to 25 years and during that time he will naturally be subject to the pressures of inflation. The RPI is the best way to limit increases in toll charges. The 30-year maximum period of tolling would be reduced if the concessionaire were to collect a certain amount of revenue from tolls before then. On current traffic forecasts, tolling by the concessionaire would not be necessary for more than about 21 or 22 years. If the concession were to start in 1992, it could therefore end by 2014—eight years after the end of the tolling period already permitted under the existing legislation. The Bill allows tolling by the Secretary of State for a further limited period within a maximum of 35 years from the commencement of tolling under these provisions—to meet any outstanding liabilities and, if desired, to set up a fund for the further maintenance of the bridges.

Part II of the Bill also provides the necessary framework for the arrangements under which the concessionaire is to be responsible for carrying out the Secretary of State's functions connected with the maintenance and operation of the bridges. In particular, it provides for the transfer of staff currently employed at the bridge by Avon county council, as the agents of the Department, to the concessionaire. Care has been taken to ensure that the Bill protects the terms and conditions of employment of the transferred staff.

The Bill also provides the necessary arrangements for the eventual termination of the concession agreement, including the transfer of the concessionaire's employees to the Secretary of State. This will help to ensure continuity of safe operation of the bridges, whatever the circumstances of the termination. Part II also provides a regime for regulating traffic on the bridges to prevent obstruction or damage. These provisions, which are somewhat more extensive than those that apply to normal stretches of motorway, are needed because of the special circumstances of the bridges and the constraints on their operation—for instance, the absence of a hard shoulder on the existing bridge. The provisions are closely modelled on those in the 1965 Act, which they would supersede.

Lastly, this part of the Bill provides for copies of the accounts both of the concessionaire and of the Secretary of State to be laid before Parliament. This follows the arrangements provided by the 1965 Act, and, more recently, the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988.

Part III of the Bill contains an assortment of miscellaneous provisions, notably to regulate operations which would interfere with the navigation of the River Severn and to protect the bridge from damage from shipping. It also deals with matters such as rating and planning permission, as well as the usual interpretation and suchlike provisions. I should also mention here the financial provisions, which are covered by clause 37. If the House agrees to give the Bill a Second Reading, we shall afterwards be asking for the House's approval of the associated money and ways and means resolutions.

The examiners have determined that the Bill is hybrid and so, subject again to the outcome of this debate, it would next be referred to a Select Committee, to consider any petitions which may be made against the Bill. The committal motion before the House would allow three further weeks from today, during which petitions might be deposited. Given that the Bill was published on 28 November and that the proposals have been the subject of extensive public consultation for a much longer period, this is a reasonable period to allow. The committal motion

also permits the Select Committee to visit the site and to hold hearings. If it does, the Government will do all that they can to facilitate this process.

I must not presume too much on the outcome of the debate on the Bill. The proposals that it contains represent a further major step forward for our initiative to bring private finance and enterprise into the provision of transport infrastructure. They will enable the earliest practicable provision of the long-awaited second Severn crossing. The removal of this bottleneck in the motorway network will provide a direct boost to communications, and, in turn, to the economy of the area, particularly in south Wales, where the need for this link has long been recognised. Accordingly, I commend the Bill to the House.

5.20 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): The Labour party welcomes the proposal for the construction of a new bridge across the river Severn. The first bridge, built almost a quarter of a century ago, even in normal circumstances has insufficient capacity to meet the traffic generated by the economies of the west of England and south Wales. However, we are less than happy with the fact that the new bridge is to be built with private finance which, as a matter of principle, seems to follow the trend towards two-tier road services—one less congested for the motorist willing and able to pay, and another with a poorer infrastructure for those less able to meet the cost or unable to charge their motoring to business use.

The Minister was fairly long on detail but short on figures for the project. We should have liked to hear about the likely costings for the project and the likely revenue from it. As we understand it, the estimates are based on the net present value of the scheme to the promoter, through a complicated and inexact formula involving toll rates, traffic forecasts and the life of the concession. In the view of the Treasury, the lower the net present value to the promoter, the better the value for the rest of us, but that approach could make the likely toll projections unrealistic, particularly during the early years of operation when the burden of private debt will be the greatest.

In any event, the Opposition are unhappy about the principle of toll roads. We consider that the Government's approach to this project is both confused and irrational. Along with such bodies as the Freight Transport Association and the AA, the Labour party considers that the need to pay tolls on a few road links is both anomalous and unfair. The Government's decision to charge at this and other crossings has been applied inconsistently, to say the least. Both the proposed and existing Severn bridges provide a great benefit, but that benefit is to the economy as a whole if the road building justifications of the Department of Transport have any basis in fact. The burden of providing such benefits ought to rest with the nation as a whole rather than with the users, as in this case.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) pointed out earlier that the taxpayers provide the access roads to the project, but the revenues arising from the construction of the bridge will go to the builder rather than to the nation. We merely channel the traffic in that direction. The revenue is collected elsewhere. In any event, other similar crossings are toll free. For example, the Britannia bridge, the M5 Avonmouth bridge and the new A55 Conwy crossing in north Wales are, or will be, toll free. Why single out this project? What guarantees can the Minister offer that the projected tolls are realistic, given that the site chosen for the new crossing is much wider than the original bridge and that the construction will take place in fast-flowing water? What guarantees can the Minister offer that the engineering difficulties inherent in such a project will not increase the risk of cost overrun?

In an article on the subject on 26 February last year, the *Financial Times* said:

"The temptation to choose the lowest cost option could store up other problems if the project ran over budget and required re-financing, as has happened with the privately financed Channel Tunnel."

It also said that, in the opinion of one of the consortia bidding for the contract, the bridge will need about 40 piers sunk into the river bed, compared with just two piers for the existing bridge. Will the Minister say something about the likely construction costs?

As I have said, the Labour party feels that the history of tolls on projects such as this has been fairly unhappy. I choose just two examples at this stage, although we shall return to the point later in our deliberations on the Bill. I draw the Minister's attention to the case of the Mersey tunnels where severe financial difficulties have been created for the transport authority concerned, despite increased revenue due to higher traffic flows and toll increases. In the Mersey travel policy plan for 1991, paragraphs 4.1.12 and 4.1.13 on page 17, the transport authority says:

"As at 31 March 1990 capital debt was some £116 million costing some £15 million to service. Of this a net deficit of £8 million was borne in 1989-90 by the poll tax payers, money that could have been allocated to areas such as education and housing or indeed poll tax reductions if the Government was prepared to write-off debt incurred from the construction of the Tunnels many years ago."

There is a similar story on the Humber bridge. A recent district auditor's report confirmed that the total toll levy may never be able to meet the full cost of operation and maintenance, interest charges and capital repayments. The report concluded that the situation was

"a matter of grave concern."

These two projects, toll operated as they are, illustrate the unhappy history of projects financed in this way. We hope that, during the later stages of the Bill, we shall be able to persuade the Government that other methods of finance are preferable.

To assist in our deliberations on the Bill, particularly as regards the principle of tolled crossings, we have the second report of the Select Committee on Transport 1985-86, House of Commons 250, parts 1-3. At the time of the inquiry, just 25 miles out of a total of 9,390 miles of motorway and private roads were subject to private tolls. The Committee considered not only that many of the crossing authorities were finding it difficult to manage the debt but that tolls were having an adverse effect on the local economy. The House will be aware that, at that time, the Select Committee advocated the abolition of toll charges on estuarial crossings. Among its reasons for doing that, the Select Committee pointed out that tolls can inhibit the development of commercial activity around such crossings. Another significant argument against the principle involved was the high cost of collection, which varied between 4·5 per cent. of income at Dartford and 25 per cent. of income at the Tay bridge. What estimates does the Minister have of collection costs on this project?

The Select Committee concluded its report by saying:

"We firmly believe that tolls should not be imposed on any major estuarial crossing which forms part of the motorway or

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trunk system. We recommend that the Government recognise the inappropriateness of tolling trunk road and motorway crossings and that the Department of Transport, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office work towards the removal of existing tolls."

We consider that the Select Committee was right then and that those sentiments are right now.

Will the Minister confirm that the design of the new bridge is French? Have the Government considered the implications for British contractors if that is so? It will not help this country to compete in the international bridge-building market if a foreign design has been chosen. Is this yet another example of the Government's determination to put supposed profit before patriotism?

Can the Minister confirm that, although the existing bridge over the Severn has a cycle and pedestrian way, the new bridge has no such facility, despite repeated requests from Avon county council? Has the Minister considered the provision of such a facility, or have the proposals been dropped so as to keep construction costs to a minimum and to accentuate the attractiveness of the project to the private sector?

The Treasury receives about £15 billion per year from Britain's road users. But with such a massive and ever-increasing sum, the Government should surely be able to fund essential projects such as this without hawking them around the private sector and without the built-in delay, expense and inconvenience that toll projects invariably generate. We believe that, the Department of Transport having proved the need, the need ought to will the means.

5.30 pm

Mr. John Cope (Northavon): The Bill is important for people in many parts of the country, and especially for those in my constituency. The existing Severn bridge starts, or finishes, depending on which way one drives across it, in my constituency. The proposed bridge will also start in my constituency. It will be very near to the twin villages of Pilning and Severn Beach. The new approach roads will affect my constituents considerably. They will be affected permanently when those roads are completed and, while they are being constructed, they will be affected considerably by construction traffic and other works nearby. The site that has been chosen makes it inevitable that the approach roads will go near and partially through the two villages that I have mentioned.

The basic question in this debate is whether the bridge is needed. If it is needed, is it to be built at the right place? As my hon. Friend the Minister made clear in his opening remarks, that has been the subject of exhaustive study and report over many years. I became convinced some time ago that a new crossing is necessary and that a bridge at English Stones is essentially the right solution. I was confirmed in that by chance a few months ago when I flew over that part of the Severn estuary when the tide was out. The reason for building the bridge in that position then became entirely clear. The engineer's decision stood out as the rock stood out on the river bed. The base of the bridge is already there.

The decisions that have been made on the bridge and on its siting lead to decisions on approach roads. It must be right to connect the new bridge both to the M4 and the M5. Wherever the bridge is sited, however, it will affect many people. There have been long discussions between individuals, groups and the various councils on my side of the Severn and, I believe, on the other side over the past few years.

Several things are clear. First, there is no route that does not affect a lot of people. Secondly, there are different layers of problem. Whichever route is chosen, some property will have to be taken in its entirety and used during the construction of the bridge to be seriously devalued by having a new motorway nearby. Often the motorway will be at quite a high level—for example, where it links with the bridge. I hope that the Minister can confirm that the compensation for the many who will be involved in payments is in the course of being improved by the Planning and Compensation Bill, which is being considered in another place. For example, that measure will double the amount of home loss payments for property that is taken. Compensation payments will be improved in other ways.

Whatever the level of compensation, there will be some who will be badly affected and whose needs will have to be taken into account. I think that the Department of Transport has done its best to assess all factors and to choose the best route that it can. I am grateful to officials of the Department for the time that they have spent with me and with my constituents and others in discussing various routes and the effects that they will have on individuals, as well as the alternative proposals that have been put forward. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, they have held important exhibitions to ensure that everyone who will be affected has the opportunity clearly to see the proposed routes and to discuss with officials the effects that they will have. Some alterations have been made to the routes during the discussions. There have been some important alterations as well to the various noise-mitigating actions that will be taken during construction.

Now we have come to the crunch. The Department of Transport has settled on the route that it thinks is the best. The choice was whether to try to obtain authority for both the bridge and the roads by means of a Bill such as the one before us or to try to secure authority for the roads at least by following the conventional public inquiry route. I think that the right choice has been made. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, there must be a Bill for the bridge, and it is best to have both the roads and the bridge gain authority in the same way and at the same time. The siting of the one will affect intimately the other.

The result for those whose property will be affected —I put this in slightly crude terms—is that they will be able to give evidence to a committee of Members who will report to the House as a whole, rather than give evidence to an inspector appointed by the Secretary of State and who would report to him. I hope that those who give evidence will find that a committee of Members will be just as responsive as any inspector to their submissions. I hope that in some ways they will be even more understanding of their concerns.

My hon. Friend the Minister was right to say that it is necessary for those who wish to give evidence to ensure that they make application in the form of a petition during the next three weeks, if the motion to commit to a Select Committee is carried, as one hopes and expects it will be, at the end of the debate.

To choose such a Bill for introducing the proposals means that the method itself is on trial. It puts great

responsibility on the members of the Select Committee. Those Members will have to make decisions that will affect directly the future of some individuals. Unlike councillors, we Members do not usually have the specific responsibility that will be placed on our colleagues who are nominated to be members of the Select Committee. Our colleagues who are chosen to serve in that way must consider carefully the costs and the benefits of the bridge—that will involve its entire construction—and the disbenefits to individuals. The benefits to motorists and commerce and industry can be estimated in various ways. The disbenefits to individuals can be measured by the loss of property values, for example. Indeed, that will have to be measured in assessing the compensation that is payable at various stages during the progress of the works.

There is some controversy about the methods of measuring the costs and the benefit of bridges and comparing the two. That is reflected in today's edition of *The Times*. I hope that our colleagues who are nominated to be members of the Select Committee will weigh these matters carefully. They have the opportunity to start with a clean sheet and to probe. They will be able to question the calculations that lie behind the design. I am sure that they should take the opportunity to hear the views of those who are affected and are on or near the site where the bridge is to be.

I hope that the Committee will come to the west and to Wales, so that its members can examine the proposals in the areas that will be affected and hear the evidence of those who will be affected by the roads. With a great project of this sort it is inevitable that some people's individual interests will be affected. That is the reason for the private Bill and hybrid Bill procedure that we follow. It is for those who are members of the Select Committee to ensure that things are done properly. That is important in the interests of those concerned and for the reputation of the House when we come to make decisions of this sort.

Apart from routing, important considerations are landscaping, noise abatement and the diverting of existing roads when there is a need for a different route to be adopted to allow them to continue to be used. Modern methods of noise abatement should be used wherever possible to ensure that the inconvenience caused by new motorways to people living in the area is minimised.

My final points relate to the nature of the Severn itself. Much of the land that is several miles from the river bank is below sea level—at least at high tide—and that makes drainage a matter of the first importance. The building of major roads in that area could seriously affect the drainage there, which is sometimes extremely tricky. The drains in the Severn valley carry a great deal of water and the effect of making changes to them are not always understood at the time. Alterations made at one location can cause flooding some miles away, creating great difficulties for the residents concerned. A proper study should be undertaken to ensure that proper drainage is provided.

The Severn is a powerful river, having strong currents. It has the second highest tidal range—between high and low tide—of any river in the world. A difference of plus or minus 10 m during each tide is not abnormal, and with some tides the difference is even greater. The Severn is also an important waterway, and those two facts together mean that the design of the bridge and of the piers—the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) pointed out that the bridge is to have many piers—will affect the currents and the way in which many tonnes of silt will be deposited along the river, above and below the bridge, which will also affect many people living in the locality.

The effects will be difficult to calculate in advance, even by modelling, but the maximum effort should be made to ensure that they are assessed and taken into account in the construction of the bridge. Such calculations have not always been made accurately in respect of past constructions on the Severn, giving rise to flooding and to other consequences that we want to avoid this time. The Committee will need to be alert to all those considerations if it is fully to appreciate the problems arising from the construction of the new bridge and their effect on the local people.

However, the House should acknowledge today that the new bridge is necessary and that the right choice of location has been made. Nevertheless, the new crossing will create many difficulties for those living in the parishes concerned and the Committee must examine whether the damage can be mitigated further. It is in the confidence that the, as yet unnamed, members of the Committee will do their best to ensure that is done that I support the Bill.

5.43 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Today marks an important landmark, for the Bill is the culmination of many years of campaigning. I pay tribute to Gwent county council and to others in south Wales for the wonderful campaign that they waged, to my hon. Friends, and to late colleagues—such as Mr. Brynmor John and Mr. Ioan Evans, who played such a valuable part in bringing the project to the fore. The *South Wales Argus*, *South Wales Echo* and *Western Mail* have all been very supportive.

The issue of the new Severn crossing has certainly occupied much of my own time in recent years. We have come a long way since November 1983, when a group of Welsh Labour Members of Parliament lobbied the then Secretary of State for Transport for a second crossing, after the state of the existing bridge had been exposed. The Secretary of State in question was that figure of enlightenment, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who told us in his usual inimitable way that he did not intend to dig another hole in the ground.

Although today is a landmark, our achievement is muted because of the deplorable way in which the matter has been handled by the Government. By handing over to a foreign-backed consortium the main route of access into and out of Wales, the Government have abdicated their responsibilities in respect of a cornerstone of the Welsh infrastructure. Their decision is shameful and an insult to Wales.

The Government have also been indifferent on the major issue of toll charges. It is intrinsic to the no-risk concessionary agreement that there will be ever-escalating increases in toll charges in the years ahead. That agreement will allow increased tolls to be levied on the existing bridge from 1992 onwards—three years before the second crossing is scheduled to be completed. That is wholly unacceptable. The proposed toll regime should not apply until the new facility is available.

At the last tolls inquiry, it was said that the proposed increases would enable debts on the existing bridge to be paid off by 2006, which is in line with the 40-year toll

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period enshrined in the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965. The Bill, however, provides for an enhanced level of tolls until 2025—a 60-year period.

Incidentally, I recall that Aneurin Bevan once posed the question, "Why not trust the Tories?" On the issue of toll charges alone, it is obvious that the Tories cannot be trusted. It is no wonder that they were reluctant to publish the concessionary agreement. We ask that the notional debt of approximately £122 million on the existing bridge be wiped out before the commencement of the new concession. In that way, tolls could be kept at a reasonable level.

The Bill makes no provision for local authorities and other interested parties to call a public inquiry. I raised that point when the Minister made his opening remarks. The denial of that right is a negation of democracy, and that omission should be rectified at the earliest opportunity.

I also think of those constituents of mine who, when they were made redundant some years ago, were advised by the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) to get on their bikes. They did, and found work on the other side of the Bristol channel. Now they are heavily penalised by heavy toll charges for doing so. Such charges are a restraint on trade and commerce, and constantly add to the cost of goods and services.

There is no consistency in Government policy. The Government claim that charges should be levied at crossings which provide exceptional benefits. In his opening remarks from the Front Bench, my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) asked whether the M5 Avonmouth bridge did not provide exceptional benefit, likewise the Britannia bridge in north Wales and the Scottish crossings of the A9 at Moray, Dornoch and Cromarty Firths, and the A82 Ballachulish bridge. The east London river crossing will also be toll free, as will the A55 Conwy crossing in north Wales—I believe that that may be related to the fact that Conwy is becoming more of a marginal seat for the Conservative party.

As the Freight Transport Association points out, to perpetuate tolls on the existing and new Severn bridges will compound the inconsistency and irrationality of Government policy.

Why does the Confederation of British Industry for Wales not realise the significance of this issue? We have not heard a dicky bird from that body, whose loyalty to the Government seems to take precedence over the interests of its members, let alone the general public. Indeed, the CBI must blush when taking contributions from its members in view of the role that it has played in the tolls issue. I am sorry that the leadership of my party did not grasp the nettle in the run-up to the last general election. A report by the Select Committee on Transport clearly set out how it would be done. Apart from minor local authority involvement, the debts from estuarial crossings are essentially notional figures on the Consolidated Fund, with no bank charges involved. The amounts involved are a flea bite compared with the outstanding debts that the Government have wiped out to pursue their privatisation policy.

Road transport is not a poor relation. It makes a massive contribution to the Exchequer—more than £18 billion annually, of which less than a quarter is spent on roads and their maintenance. Despite that, the Government are prepared to squeeze the last penny from this vital sector of the economy. I am worried that in the process they are damaging Wales, which has struggled for new jobs and a little prosperity after so many economic setbacks.

The second Severn crossing is part of a strategic road network. As the poet John Donne said,

"No man is an Island".

That is true in relation to the second Severn crossing, which is one section of a jigsaw made up of interlocking parts. In connection with that, I must express my concern about the delays in a number of important Welsh road improvement schemes. In the context of the second Severn crossing, I am especially worried about the delay over the Brynglas Crindau tunnel scheme on the M4 as it is a major bottleneck, which needs to be tackled. Otherwise, Newport will be choked with traffic congestion. There have been suggestions that that scheme would be delayed, but the Welsh Office seems to have had second thoughts after protests. Mr. Christopher Tapp, chief executive of Newport borough council, points out in a letter to me dated 11 January that the Welsh Office is now planning a start in 1992, and not in 1991, but that would still result in one year's delay. The Minister of State at the Welsh Office seems to have confirmed that in a letter to me today.

In relation to the problems associated with the construction of the second Severn crossing, I think of the people at the sharp end—my constituents in Caldicot, Magor, Rogiet and Undy. I have always been an enthusiastic supporter of the concept of a second Severn crossing, but I have never wished to underestimate the environmental and other difficulties involved. I thank the Government for taking heed of my advice, and for establishing consultative machinery. A committee has been formed, consisting of representatives of local interests on the Welsh side—community councils, Monmouth borough council, Gwent county council—together with Welsh Office representatives. Grievances can be aired and the general public can be kept informed of developments before they are under way.

One major grievance was voiced by the people of Magor and Undy, who formed an action committee with a view to stopping heavy lorries from passing through their villages on the way to the Severn crossing site. Meetings were held and they drew up a large petition, which I handed in at the Welsh Office in Cardiff, accompanied by members of the action committee and local authority representatives. I am pleased to say that the Welsh Office understood the difficulties and the building of an access road for construction traffic was brought forward by a year, with the result that lorries will leave the M4 to the east of junction 23 at Magor.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for paying that compliment to the Welsh Office. However, a few moments ago he referred to the Brynglas tunnels and the Malpas relief road and he implied that work on that scheme would not start until 1992. I actually said that we shall go out to tender in the spring of this year, which would imply a start of work in this calendar year.

Mr. Hughes: I am glad of that confirmation of good news from the Minister as there was great concern in

Newport and the surrounding areas about that scheme. However, the chief executive in Newport is certainly of the impression that it would mean a 1992 start.

I have mentioned difficulties which have been alleviated for the people of Magor and Undy. Now Caldicot, led by the mayor, Mrs. Pauline Watts, is requesting that the access road which I referred to earlier be extended to bypass the Pill area of Caldicot. From my local knowledge, I know that that new proposal has a good deal of logic, and I ask the Welsh Office to consider it carefully.

Last Saturday morning I met a delegation from Rogiet community council, which suggested that the direction in which tolls will be collected on the new crossing should be changed from westbound to eastbound. The suggestion was made because of continuing concern in the village about the levels of noise and air pollution emanating from westbound vehicles leaving the toll plaza and accelerating away on a rising 1 in 62 incline. Given the prevailing south-west wind, the village of Rogiet would be in the direct line of exhaust and other noxious fumes. That strikes me as an entirely legitimate point.

The Automobile Association says:

"The new bridge will have a dual three-lane standard. However, the approach road serving the new bridge on the English side of the River Severn is to be constructed as a dual two-lane carriageway, with provision for a third lane in the future 'when the need arises'. This represents . . . a planned bottleneck."

At least the AA knows something about roads; I hope that its views will be taken into consideration.

The Government should seriously consider the important environmental and other problems associated with the construction of the bridge. Although I welcome the concept of a second Severn crossing, I cannot give the Bill three cheers. First, the Government have handed over an important section of our infrastructure to a foreign-backed consortium, which in turn seems to have milked a no-risk agreement out of the Government. Secondly, no concession has been made on toll charges; on the contrary, they will be increased markedly and paid over a longer period. The debt on the existing bridge should have been wiped out, and no further toll increase should be imposed on that bridge until the new one is completed.

I hope that the Government will reconsider, even at this late stage. Meanwhile, the most that I can give the Bill is one cheer—it deserves no more.

6.2 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Almost every time one approaches the Severn bridge one appreciates the need for a second crossing on that great and turbulent river. Indeed, whenever one crosses the bridge itself, one somehow feels—as one looks at the repairs and the lane closures, and considers the history of the bridge—that one is wearing the torn and tattered trousers of Wales. Wales —with an economy which is always ready to thrive, and is extremely attractive to industry not only in England but in the rest of the world—deserves better than it has received from a congested, poorly designed and poorly repaired bridge in recent decades.

I welcome the decision to build a second Severn crossing. I urge the Department, however, to ensure that the new crossing is adequate—not only adequate for 1995-96, when it is likely to open, but of suitable size, quality and design for the 21st century. The Bill makes positive statements about the state of affairs at the crossing 30 and 40 years from now: the concession is for 30 years and provision is made for the collection of tolls by the Secretary of State for a further five years thereafter. We must be sure—and I hope that the Minister will be able to assure us in due course—that the design that has been sought and provided will meet the needs of the year 2025 as they are envisaged now. We need to know that we shall not be faced in 15 or 20 years' time with the inadequacies and complaints that the existing bridge has brought repeatedly to the House of Commons.

May I ask the Minister to tell us whether the decision to provide a second crossing has been viewed as part of an overall transport and freight strategy or as merely a part of the patchwork of roads to be designed to meet the current obvious shortfall? Are we to expect the new bridge merely to bring more and more freight on to the roads, at the expense of rail transport? Has the Department considered, for example, the desirability of improving rail links at the same time? Has it considered how rail transport can be enhanced—particularly the carriage of freight—to keep cars off the roads of south Wales, rather than their being driven in increasing numbers on to those roads?

I am sure that the Minister knows that, once we move north of the M4 in south Wales and up towards mid-Wales, the roads quickly run out and we soon find ourselves on what are—at least by comparison with the M4—not much more than country lanes. I am pleased to see that the Minister of State, Welsh Office is present. Will part of the overall strategy be the introduction, at long last, of roads that improve the Welsh transport infrastructure, especially through the provision of a proper link from north and mid-Wales to south Wales? Now that a new Severn crossing is being provided and the A55 is nearing completion as a major expressway, surely it is logical to provide such a link between north and mid-Wales to, in particular, the south-east of England. That will enable Wales to thrive rather more easily than it can now, given the present constraints.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman knows that a bypass is shortly to be opened on the A470 at Llanidloes in his constituency. That is part of the £100 million investment in the A470 that we have made since 1979; some £70 million is still to be invested in the north-south route.

Mr. Carlile: I am all too well aware of the imminent opening of that bypass, which is currently under construction—not least because of the unhappiness of a number of my constituents about the way in which the construction contract has been carried out, which has often been to the considerable detriment of local residents. The bypass is very welcome; I am sure that the Minister of State will agree, however, that it is quite a long way from the M4, particularly on the existing Welsh roads.

I suggest to the Minister of State that, on current plans, the improvements that he now envisages will do well to knock more than five or 10 minutes off the journey time from Llanidloes to, say, Cardiff or Newport and that much more needs to be done.

Perhaps, tempted by the Minister of State, we are straying a little wide of the subject of the debate. Let me put to the Minister a further point, which has already been made this evening: although I accept the clear terms in which his assurance was given, we must be certain that the construction of the bridge will not inhibit either existing

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shipping—on which he gave an assurance—or the possibility of the development of shipping facilities at some of the ports on the river. Large ships use the river. As we are considering road development for the next 30 years, we should also consider shipping development over the next 30 years. We should not view the development of merchant shipping with a pessimistic eye, as we tend to at present.

Mr. Freeman: I assure the hon. and learned Gentleman that, in terms of the prospective increase in trade and size of ships, the Department of Transport will certainly take into account the representations made by the appropriate trade, conservation and waterways protection bodies so that the design and operation of the bridge and the location of its piers will facilitate both existing trade and, where sensible, increases in the size of ships.

Mr. Carlile: I am extremely grateful to the Minister, not least for the usual clarity of his intervention. To illustrate what I have in mind, there is considerable potential for the development of trade between the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the Community, following the changes that are to take place in 1992. Much of that trade may wish to use Severn river ports as staging posts.

Conditional agreement has been reached about the concession. Considerable concern has been expressed in Wales about the belief that French interests are the most likely to benefit from the contract and the tolls that will be collected during the next 30 years. As a keen pro-European, I do not wish to be insular, but it would help if we could be reassured that every attempt has been made to ensure that domestic interests will benefit from the concession.

A more worrying point is that the Bill refers to the concession being granted for a period of 30 years. If we look at the history of public liability companies during the last 30 years, we see that that is an extremely long time in the life of any company. Large companies that are household names at one moment cease to exist soon thereafter. What steps is the Department of Transport taking to try to ensure—it may be impossible to secure an absolute assurance—that 12 or 15 years' hence we do not find that the Department has been left with an extremely expensive white elephant on its hands because of the financial failure of the concessionaires or because of successive takeovers of the concessionaires? Can we be reassured that those who become the majority shareholders will be unable in a few years' time to take advantage of company law provisions in order to avoid their obligations under the concession?

The Government seem to be convinced that the right approach is to construct a toll bridge, and the collection of tolls between south Wales and England is correct in principle. Much has already been said about that, but it seems to me that that approach places the Welsh economy at a disadvantage compared, say, with Avon's economy. Can the Government assure us that toll levels will remain fair? The table set out in the Bill is helpful, but it will be possible for the concessionaires to come to the House to seek an increase in tolls above the retail prices index. The concessionaires may be able to produce figures that show that they have bought a pup and that they are not making the profits that they expected to make out of the concession. Will the Government at least assure us that they will hold the concessionaires to the principles that underlie the concession and that it will be bad luck for the concessionaires if they find in a few years' time that during the tendering procedure they miscalculated? It is important that that principle should be established. I am grateful that the Minister for Public Transport is nodding in assent.

A powerful plea has just been made on behalf of those villages that will be affected during the concession period. It may be that their position could best be protected if construction of the slip roads took place at the earliest possible stage so that they could be used for the carriage of goods and materials for the construction of the bridge. I hope that the Department will do all that it can to reduce disturbance to a minimum.

The bridge is expected to be completed by the end of 1995. That date may be of great importance to companies that are considering establishing important new factories or office premises in south Wales. In order to ensure the maximum possible confidence for companies that are thinking about coming to south Wales, will the Government ensure that time is of the essence of the contract for that part of the concession that involves the construction of the bridge? The effect of making time of the essence of the contract would ensure that the highest possible incentive was given to the concessionaires to complete the contract on time, particularly if heavy penalties were imposed if the bridge was not completed on time.

I welcome the decision to construct a second river crossing. Despite the misgivings I have expressed, I hope that it will have a fair wind.

6.17 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes), I came here to give three cheers for the new bridge. However, having listened to the Minister's speech—I apologise to my hon. Friend, since I do not mean this in any personal sense—I do not believe that we should give a single cheer for it. The Bill is a rip off by those who will build the bridge and by the Government.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy), who is sitting in the Whips' position, that my late decision to take part in the debate is in no way to be taken as a wish by me to serve on the Committee that considers the Bill. I am sure that those hon. Members who are selected to serve on the Committee will be delighted by my absence, since my presence could only prolong its deliberations.

The right hon. Member for Northavon (Mr. Cope) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East highlighted the importance of consulting those who will be immediately affected once the construction of the bridge is in hand. That is correct. However, in his speech the right hon. Gentleman referred to a point that brought back to mind a controversy that arose at the time of the construction of the first Severn bridge. He referred to the rocks upon which the piers and piles are to be laid. I well recollect our late friend, Iori Thomas, the Member of Parliament for Rhondda, waxing eloquently and angrily about the fact that the Beaufort estate derives great benefit from the piers and the piles. Apparently, the Beaufort estate owns the bed of the river Severn. The more the piers

and piles, the more the benefit to the Beaufort estate. A rent has to be paid to the Beaufort estate for every pier and pile that is laid on the bed of the river. I should be intrigued, although not particularly worried, to discover whether that is still so. If it is, the more piers there are, the merrier the Beauforts will be.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) made an important point about the shadow effect of the bridge. I was lecturing as an economist when the bridge was first announced and I remember warning on Welsh radio and television that its greatest benefit would be to the south-east of Wales and that unless a proper transport system and incentives were provided to encourage industry to go beyond the more immediate locations it could present problems for west and mid-Wales. Although the second bridge will have a lesser effect, it will have a similar effect and will increase relatively the attractiveness of the coastal strip to the south-east of Wales.

I hope that the Department of Transport has undertaken full appraisal of all the designs. By failing to observe its normal procedures and by changing the design of the present bridge at the last moment, it caused remedial costs of £52·2 million, all of which are related to design fault. The recent increase in tolls to £1 would not have been necessary had it not been for those design faults, and that increase will raise less money than the design faults cost. The monitoring of the design is crucial.

I said that the Bill is a rip off. I had no preconceived ideas because I had not read the Bill until about half an hour before entering the Chamber. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) took up the Minister's point about approach roads, which will be paid for from public funds. This will not be a minor cost to the public. We are told that the bridge will cost £300 million, but, unless I misheard, the approach roads, which we will pay for, will cost £200 million. The Minister nods. Taxpayers are providing a £200 million subsidy to those who will construct the bridge. The roads that we are building have no purpose other than to lead to the bridge. The constructors are therefore getting a massive capital subsidy from the outset.

Mr. Freeman: Since my opening speech, support for the Bill seems to have decreased rather than increased. I obviously failed to explain that there was a competition whereby each proposed contractor expressed, in terms of revenue at 1989 prices, the minimum revenue that it would accept, bearing in mind all the risks of construction of the bridge and its maintenance, operation and interest costs. We chose Laing because £976 million, as shown in the concession agreement, was the best possible estimate of revenue at 1989 prices. The risk lies entirely with that consortium. The higher the cost, the smaller the profit. The increase in tolls will be set by indexing them with a maximum increase in the RPI each year. The tolls earned by the consortium will be taken back to 1989 prices and added up each year. Once the figure of £976 million is reached, the toll ends and the bridge reverts to the Secretary of State. That is not a rip off. We compared the financial consequences of the consortium, with £976 million at 1989 prices as the maximum revenue to be earned, with designing and building a conventional bridge in the public sector and concluded, in a complicated calculation, that the award of the tender to Laing presented the best value for money for the taxpayer.

Mr. Williams: I shall consider the Minister's remarks, which were detailed. However, it was useful and helpful information. It might have been helpful if we had had an opportunity to absorb it earlier. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) interrupts. We are trying to have a positive and sensible discussion.

The Bill is a rip off of the taxpayer and the motorist. For example, the Government will make windfall profits from the bridge. As the Minister said, the yield from tolls is already £15 million higher than necessary because of an error by the Department in the first instance, but those tolls will be raised higher than the Government thought necessary simply to match the toll on the new bridge. That represents a windfall. The way in which the Minister anticipates dealing with the increases in toll charges is unjustifiable and has no basis in logic. Tolls will increase according to the cost of living index, without any challenge whatsoever; only if they increase above that rate will there be a challenge.

The bridge will cost £300 million. The highest cost will be servicing not the structure but the capital. What relationship has the RPI to that, because that cost is pre-determined? The rate of interest is arranged and is unaffected by changes in cost. If anything, it is possible that the constructors will benefit from a reduction in interest rates. If they organise their finances correctly, their major costs of servicing capital can decrease while charges to the public increase according to the retail prices index. That measures the changes in the costs of the average household, which are unrelated to the cost of operating a bridge.

Not only is there a windfall profit to the Government from the toll arrangements and increases but a massive further windfall to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East alluded. Under the present arrangements, the Government believed that the motorist's debt to the Government would be expunged by 2006, but under the Bill the Minister has the power to continue tolls, at the RPI increased rate, for 35 years. In other words, tolls on the present bridge will continue not until 2025 but until 2030. Is that a correct assessment? The Minister seems uncertain, so I shall err on his side and take the lower figure. Assuming that the date is 2025, inflated tolls will continue for 19 years after the date when the public will have paid its debt to the Department of Transport. We shall pay a £200 million capital subsidy to those who build the bridge and an inflated toll, linked to the RPI, to those who operate it. The Government will sit back, smiling all over their face, drawing in the benefits of not only inflated tolls until 2006 but of income that they did not expect to have, at an inflated rate, from then on. In other words, it will produce a surplus of about £100 million beyond the date until which motorists expect to pay tolls on the existing Severn bridge.

Sir Wyn Roberts: But does not the right hon. Gentleman forget one crucial fact: we shall have an additional bridge?

Mr. Williams: I am grateful to the Minister. With respect, he usually talks about market forces, but there is no question of market forces here. We shall have to pay higher prices on the bridge for which we have already paid. There is no question of market prices for bridge 1 and bridge 2. The idea that we are getting a bargain is nonsense. Does the Minister seriously suggest that a £200

[Mr. Williams]

million subsidy, higher tolls than necessary on the new bridge and a windfall of tolls to the Government for almost 20 years beyond the date after which the charges for the present Bill have been met, is anything but a rip off? Can he suggest that that is a good deal for the public? If he can, I suggest that later he will regret his words.

6.30 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) made a devastating criticism of the funding of the bridge. We all look forward to that argument being explored in Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) also made criticisms. It is fair to say that the only thing that unites us is support for the principle of a second crossing. There can be no doubt about the benefits of a second crossing. We welcome a crossing principally because communications both into and out of Wales are unacceptable and conditions on the existing bridge are intolerable for both the people who use it and the economic development in Wales. Economic development particularly worries me and it will be the thrust of my arguments this evening.

I am worried about the consequence for regional development of Wales not only under existing circumstances but in those which will prevail after 1 January 1993 when we have to compete in the European single market and possibly face the prospect of a single currency. Unless we have good communications and a proper regional policy, we in Wales will not stand a chance of competing with the dynamic areas of the Low Countries, northern France and Germany.

There is no doubt that there is a need for the crossing. I use in evidence the undoubted benefits that have accrued from the M4. Ever since the Severn bridge was opened and the development along the M4 corridor took place we have seen a measure of industrial development and economic regeneration in south Wales which has gone some way to offsetting the losses that we incurred as a result of the contraction of the coal and steel industries. The most recent developments were the Ford development at Bridgend and the Bosch development in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Smith). Last Friday there was an exciting announcement by Imperial college that it would set up a new science and research park in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). All those exciting developments have come to Wales as a result of improved communications via the M4.

If we are to ensure that the whole region benefits, we must pick up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East when he referred to a jigsaw and the points made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West about the need to ensure that there is a proper network of communications. If we do not respond to that need, there will be a corridor of economic activity and prosperity along the M4 but no social, community and economic development in the valleys that do not have good access to the M4. The prospects for such areas will be grim.

Shortly before Christmas my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) and I were bitterly upset by the announcement by the Welsh Office of the road programme for the coming year. The road programme is important because it will provide the link which will ensure that we benefit from the new Severn crossing. My constituency is particularly badly served by roads. We have one principal road—the A469. As the Minister will be aware, it is a narrow, winding road which is invariably subject to unacceptable delays. It brings environmental disadvantages to the people who live along it. It chokes any prospect of economic development in the valley.

To tackle the problems that I have outlined, Mid Glamorgan county council has an ambitious programme of road improvements. It wants to open up the valley and improve the communications. It wants to link the valleys to the M4 and the Severn crossing so that we can benefit from economic growth. The first stage of the programme was the Llanbradach bypass, which was the subject of a submission to the Welsh Office last year. As part of its transport grant submission, the council asked for approval of expenditure of £10·6 million for that one small bypass. The Welsh Office offered approval of only £1·5 million. The importance of the bypass has two aspects. First, unless it is built, the environment in Llanbradach and Ystrad Mynach in the centre of the valley will continue to make people's existence miserable. Secondly, without the bypass, any future developments further up the valley will be stymied. There is no point in building a bypass in the lower part of the valley if there is a bottleneck in the middle, with the traffic whipping round Llanbradach and Ystrad Manach and being caught in Bargoed or wherever.

Exactly the same problem has afflicted the neighbouring constituencies. Funding for the Pontypridd bypass is in jeopardy, as is the link to the A470. The Minister rapidly rose to justify the A470 development, but the link included Merthyr which was also subject to a cash cut-off by the Welsh Office. Again, in my constituency the Bargoed bypass application has failed. All such developments are singularly important to the valley constituencies because they link us to the M4 corridor of prosperity. Mid Glamorgan county council recognised that, because in its preface to the transport policy and programmes submission to the Welsh Office it said:

> "The major schemes planned by the County Council besides contributing to Structure Plan policies are seen as complementary to the Secretary of State's Valleys Programme in that they will encourage new economic activity to locate within the heart of the valleys by virtue of the better communications so created. In addition they will free the congested urban commercial areas of problems associated with congestion and poor environment and will enable the process of urban renewal to gather momentum by breathing life back into some of the County's town centres and by encouraging private investment."

We all agree with that. The Llanbradach bypass scheme meets all the criteria set down by the Welsh Office. The scheme was not approved by the Welsh Office and Mid Glamorgan was singularly badly hit.

In the programme approved for 1991-92, Mid Glamorgan was allocated 14·9 per cent. of the available funds; it has 18·7 per cent. of the Welsh population. South Glamorgan has 14 per cent. of the Welsh population; it was allocated 37·7 per cent. of available funds. West Glamorgan, with 12·6 per cent. of the Welsh population, was allocated 16·7 per cent. of the funds. Our community in Mid Glamorgan is disadvantaged. We saw the same pattern in the past. In the past three years, Mid Glamorgan was allocated on average 15 per cent. of the

total. The average allocated to South Glamorgan was 25 per cent. of the total funds available and the average allocation to West Glamorgan was 31·3 per cent.

In the next two years the average funds that will be made available to Mid Glamorgan will be 17·8 per cent. but to South Glamorgan it will be a massive 46 per cent. I use those figures to show that we in Mid Glamorgan have been done a great disservice by the Welsh Office. Two decisions have particularly disadvantaged us. The first is the decision that the expenditure of £250 million on the Conwy tunnel in the Minister's constituency should be top-sliced off all the expenditure available to Wales. As a result, the lion's share of Welsh money is going to the Minister's constituency. There is a much reduced pool to share out between the other counties of Wales. Secondly, even from that limited pool, South Glamorgan receives the lion's share because of the Government's commitment. I make no criticism of the Butetown link road; I have no reservations about the expenditure on that. The lion's share of the remaining pool has gone to the Butetown link road and we know why the Government are pouring funds into that development.

If the Minister wants to have public support for his road programme and the concept of a new crossing, and if he wants balanced, stable communities in the valleys of Wales, he must listen when the people of the valleys say, "We must have adequate communications". He must ensure that we are linked to the M4. It is only if he provides that sort of investment that we can benefit from the prospect of a second Severn crossing.

6.40 pm

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): This has been a singularly well informed debate. I hope that the Minister of State, Welsh Office and the Minister for Public Transport can return to the Welsh Office and the Department of Transport, respectively, with many important and useful ideas from this debate.

I remember, as will all Welsh Members, the opening of the Severn bridge and the hope that it brought to the people of Wales that Wales and England would come closer. In many respects, that dream has become a nightmare. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) who, over many years, has led and championed a campaign to improve the conditions on the bridge.

Only last week, many hundreds of motorists and I had to face a 73-mile detour round Gloucestershire into south Wales because the bridge was yet again closed to all traffic. My hon. Friends have highlighted those delays. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) referred to the regular delays on the bridge caused by bad weather, high winds and accidents. Just one accident can mean miles of delays and hold-ups.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) rightly said that the present bridge was badly designed in the first place. We have been paying for that financially, economically and socially. I understand from the Minister that the present repairs to the bridge are due to be finished by August 1991. I hope that that will be the case. The imposition of the 40 mph speed limit and the introduction of the narrow lanes which have been there since 1985 have led to a 40 per cent. increase in traffic, the number of accidents annually varying between 65 and 31. The fact that the bridge is actually damaging the Welsh economy means that we welcome a second crossing into the Principality.

The present bridge carries 6,600 million tonnes of goods into Wales, and more than 800 million tonnes out of Wales. The crossing is vital to Wales because it brings much-needed inward investment. Europeans, Japanese and others see the bridge as a way into south Wales to develop our region. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly rightly said that the much-vaunted valleys initiative, which the Secretary of State for Wales launched some years ago, relies heavily on a proper transport and highways infrastucture with links to the M4 and both bridges. Unless the promised developments and improvements go ahead, the valleys initiative and talk of improvement in the area are nonsense.

The Confederation of British Industry, the Welsh Development Agency, all our local authorities, the trade unions and every political party in Wales recognise the importance of a second crossing for Wales. That is why we welcome it. However, there are essential and important safeguards which I hope will be built into the Bill as it goes through its somewhat complicated parliamentary procedure.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West rightly pointed to the need to have another look at the basis on which the bridge is financed. The Department of Transport is providing £148 million and the Welsh Office £45 million. The linkage of both bridges may bring many problems for the future financing of this bridge. The Standing Conference on Regional Policy in South Wales has never accepted the £122 million historic debt, saying that it should be written off. If that is done, it will bring about a 20 per cent. reduction in tolls on the bridge. We need a thorough financial investigation into that.

There is a need to protect the countryside and wildlife. We must pay special regard to Avon and Gwent which will be affected by noise and visual intrusion. There is also a need to ensure proper connections from the bridge to the M4 and M5. We in Wales believe that if there is a motorway standard of four lanes each way in England, it is right and proper that there should be a similar one in Wales. There is no reason whatever for any differentiation between Wales and England in that respect.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East said, we must be extremely careful that the building of the bridge is not a precedent for future schemes in Britain. John Laing is backed by French financial institutions which want to break into the United Kingdom market to finance infrastructure projects privately. That might not be good for the British economy generally.

The tolls are of great concern to the people of Wales. Some months ago tolls were increased to £2 for cars. I believed, as did many hon. Members, that that was to sweeten possible buyers and to make the bridge more acceptable to the private sector. Under the present regime the tolls will end by 2006. Today hon. Members have repeatedly pointed out that it is not right that increased tolls should be levied on the existing bridge, before the new crossing is built. That is wholly unacceptable. Under the Bill, tolls will possibly continue until 2025.

The Department of Transport should deal with the maintenance costs after 2006, thus ensuring lower tolls. It is unbelievable—indeed, it is staggering—that in the past 20 years the tolls have increased by 1,600 per cent.—an increase in real terms of 135 per cent. The cost of collecting

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

the tolls amounts to 26 per cent. of the total income from tolls. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) rightly referred to the findings on tolls of the Select Committee on Transport and I hope that they will form a backcloth to our consideration of this Bill in Committee.

The Bill envisages big increases for private cars—an immediate 42·5 per cent. increase to £2·85 and, assuming 8 per cent. inflation, an increase to £4·50 by 1995. Goods vehicles will pay twice the present level. Those figures should be reviewed during the passage of the Bill. The Bill does not make provision for local authorities and others to object to increased tolls over the next 30 years, as they can do at present. That is wholly unacceptable. In Committee and elsewhere, we shall press to have that changed.

I hope that the Minister will agree that the two bridges should be the joint responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Wales. The Bill envisages that only the Secretary of State for Transport will have responsibility. That is wrong. The Welsh Office has an important role to play.

The whole of Wales will look with great interest at what is to occur. The crossing is of great importance to our economy. Unless we get it right now, we shall store up immense social and economic problems for the future of our country.

6.48 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): It gives me great pleasure as Minister of State to commend this Bill to the House and to have heard the general welcome for it, despite the many detailed criticisms which I cannot possibly answer in the few minutes remaining to me. My personal pleasure is heightened by the fact that I witnessed the key stages of the construction of the existing bridge, and I was present at its opening by Her Majesty the Queen in 1966. It was not thought to be poorly designed then.

I have also had the pleasure of playing a part in drawing up the present proposals since we began thinking about them, as the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) reminded us, in the early 1980s. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the thinking that has gone into the proposals is by no means a negation of the Government's responsibility; rather, it is a demonstration of their total commitment.

Since the bridge was opened 25 years ago, it has made a vital contribution to the major economic growth of south Wales and has added to the attractiveness of the area for incoming investment from the United Kingdom and abroad. However, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport noted, the bridge has become something of a victim of its own success. The increasing demands placed upon it, particularly in the past decade, have led to the need for increased capacity and we are now seeking to meet that within the provisions of the Bill.

There is no question in our mind, and certainly not in the minds of hon. Members representing Wales, about the need for the second Severn crossing. Its importance to Wales, and to both sides of the estuary, cannot be overstated. I believe that the scheme in the Bill is exciting and presents great opportunities for the future. The bridge will be an international showpiece, and it will provide an impressive gateway to Wales.

The bridge's design features will relieve many of the difficulties experienced on the existing crossing. It will be a dual three-lane motorway, plus hard shoulder, which will reduce the risk of congestion from breakdowns and accidents. Most importantly, the new bridge will have wind shielding throughout its entire length which will ensure that the new crossing will remain open to all traffic except during the most extreme weather conditions. All that, together with the reduced length of the proposed route as compared with that via the existing bridge, will relieve present and predicted traffic congestion. It will also result in considerable savings in time and vehicle operating costs.

On a broader level, the new crossing will help greatly to maintain and increase the momentum of economic regeneration in Wales. It will improve the profitability of industry by facilitating access to the rest of Great Britain and Europe.

I also welcome the opportunities provided in the Bill for participation with the private sector in undertaking such a development. In common with other major infrastructure schemes of this kind, there will inevitably be local concerns. We have consulted widely on the scheme at various stages of its planning and we have been sensitive to local opinion as we have developed our proposals. In Wales we have been conscious, for example, of the effects on villages such as Rogiet, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Newport, East, which will be close to the route of the new approach road. We have also recognised the concerns expressed in planning the route. We recognise the impact of the new crossing on other parts of Wales and on other roads in Wales, such as the A469, mentioned by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) seemed to welcome the scheme, but he was critical about its financing—the tolling—and other aspects. I must tell him, however, that it was a Labour Government who enacted the Severn Bridge Tolls Act 1965, which originally provided for tolling at the present bridge. In recent years this Government have also recognised tolls as a means by which private enterprise and initiative can be harnessed for the provision of not only estuarial crossings but new roads. A Bill that would facilitate a more general provision in future of new toll roads and crossings is currently being considered in another place.

In the case of the second Severn bridge, two strong arguments lead us to the conclusion that the best way to finance the project is through tolls. I do not want to press the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East on whether he is reneging on the views expressed in 1964 by the then Labour Minister, whose opinion was clear:

> "My policy is that tolls should be charged on expensive new river crossings, such as the Severn Bridge, which will provide exceptional savings in cost and time to a clearly defined category of road users."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1964; Vol. 703, c. *186*.]

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East also referred to the second report of the Select Committee on Transport for 1985-86. The Government's policy on the tolling of estuarial crossings was explained clearly in their reply to that report, and that policy has not changed. Hon. Members have mentioned other crossings, but it would not be practicable to levy tolls at all estuarial crossings,

especially when a convenient alternative to that crossing exists—the A55, for example, is in close proximity to the new tunnel under the Conwy, in my constituency.

I assure the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) that the privately funded scheme for the provision of the second Severn crossing was selected on the basis that it offered the best overall value for money of all those schemes submitted, whether for private or public financing, by the selected bidders. Bids for the scheme were sought on terms as near as practicable to being directly comparable. Before a final decision was made, the shortlisted bids were exhaustively evaluated to assess the full range of costs and benefits, direct and indirect, which each offered. The assessment took into account, for example, the implications of cost overruns, the extent to which risks were being borne by the concessionaire or the taxpayer, and the amounts of tax payable.

Mr. Alan Williams *rose*——

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have just one minute left.

Mr. Williams: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister has referred to alternative designs and costings. In Committee it would be advantageous to have those alternative costings and other such information. Once we go into Committee, I will be unable to raise that matter with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and therefore I want to take this opportunity to ask the Minister to give a guarantee that he will make that information available to the House.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Many of the arguments that have been made in this short debate cannot be answered within the minute remaining. Those matters will arise again at local level before the Select Committee and when the Bill is in Committee.

I stress that the Bill will undoubtedly result in positive benefits to those in Wales and on the Severn side. It represents an important step in bringing the resources of the private sector into a major transport project. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of seven Members, four to be nominated by the House and three by the Committee of Selection.

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than the twenty-first day after this day, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the Select Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents.

That if no such Petition as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) above is presented, or if all such Petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Select Committee, the order for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be committed to a Standing Committee.

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

That the Select Committee have power to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom and to report from day to day the Minutes of Evidence taken before it.

That three be the Quorum of the Select Committee.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

SEVERN BRIDGES BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Severn Bridges Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure of the Secretary of State under the Act and of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other enactment out of money so provided.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

WAYS AND MEANS

SEVERN BRIDGES BILL

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Severn Bridges Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the levying of tolls by the Secretary of State in respect of vehicles using the existing Severn bridge or the second Severn bridge constructed in pursuance of the Act,

(2) the imposition of charges in respect of the removal, or the repair, adjustment or refuelling, of vehicles at rest in places on or near the bridges in relation to which regulations made under the Act have effect, and

(3) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of sums received by or on behalf of the Secretary of State under or by virtue of the Act.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill [*Lords*] may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first time and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That, since no Petitions remain against the Bill, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

7 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): The Bill has been drafted to give the two generating companies the power to do nothing more than lay cooling water works in the river Humber. Those works will serve generating stations being built under powers already granted by the Secretary of State for Energy. Therefore, we are not discussing—at least, I hope that we are not discussing—the principle of building a power station on that site. In addition, we should not be discussing the virtues of one form of generation against any other. Those issues have been discussed elsewhere over many years.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry gave consent as long ago as June 1972 to the suitability of the Killingholme site for power generation. The House endorsed that decision in July 1972 by approving the Killingholme Generating Station (Ancillary Powers) Act 1972. The Secretary of State for Energy gave further consent in 1990 for PowerGen and National Power each to build a combined cycle gas turbine development with a capacity of up to 1,000 MW. At that time no organisations with legitimate interests in the river objected to the proposals. It was made clear that cooling water supplies would need to be taken from, and returned to, the river Humber. That applied whatever type of fuel was used.

By virtue of the Killingholme Generating Station (Ancillary Powers) Act and the 1990 planning consent, both the House and the Secretary of State for Energy have already endorsed the decision to build generating stations on a site at Killingholme. In essence, the new Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill merely seeks the permission of the House to build shorter cooling water intake and outfall works than would have been built under the 1972 Act. Therefore, all that is now required is statutory approval for the laying of pipes related to that development. The generating stations are already under construction by virtue of the planning consent that has already been obtained. Therefore, it is absolutely essential for the House to agree to revive the Bill today and allow it to pass through its various stages so that the ancillary works required for the generating stations can be started.

Objectors to the Bill at this late stage have already cost a great deal of time and money and it is difficult to see why.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): The hon. Gentleman says that the objectors have cost a lot of money because time has been taken, but it is important to explain that until last November it was illegal to pass the Bill. In 1975 the Council of Ministers decided that gas could not be used to make electricity. Therefore, nobody had held up the Bill except the EC because permission was only given last November.

Mr. Knapman: I was merely referring to the fact that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and, later, the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) saw fit to object to the Bill. Those objections have delayed the Bill, which seems perfectly straightforward and I cannot see why that should have been done.

National Power and PowerGen are required to promote the private Bill. The Bill is required to overcome the prohibitions of the Humber Conservancy Act 1905 that prevents the laying of pipes on or in the foreshore and bed of the Humber between the river line and the high water mark without parliamentary approval, which is why we are here today. Therefore, by promoting the Bill, National Power and PowerGen are complying with the parliamentary requirements of the 1905 Act; they are not in any way attempting to circumvent normal planning procedures—far from it. The relevant local authorities have been consulted and have given consent to the proposed plans for the power stations. They have stated that they will not object to the cooling water works proposals outlined in the 1989 Bill.

As evidence of local authority approval, I have a letter from Glanford borough council dated 11 December 1989 stating that the borough council's planning committee has no objections to the Bill's proposals. The letter was from the senior solicitor of Glanford borough council, writing to the planning and development services officer of the Central Electricity Generating Board. It stated:

"Dear Sirs,

Re: Proposed Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill.

Further to my letter dated 16 November 1989 I am now able to inform you that on 7 December the Borough Council's Planning Committee resolved that Glanford wishes to raise no objections to the proposals contained in the Bill."

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): It was interesting to hear the letter sent from Glanford borough council planning committee, but is it not also true that Humberside county council, which is Labour controlled, did not object to the proposal?

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of that. It is my understanding that no objections from any of the local interested parties have been received. I intended to read out a list of the various organisations which have not objected.

The local authorities have taken the same stance in respect of the power stations proposed by the CEGB in 1972 and again in 1989, after the CEGB, National Power and PowerGen had revised plans for the site and decided to build smaller capacity combined cycle gas turbine stations. Furthermore—this is what Opposition Members are putting at risk—the plants will provide immediate

short-term employment for construction workers, and local employment once the plant is in operation. Up to 550 workers will be employed by PowerGen during the construction phase and National Power will need about 350 workers.

Consultations have taken place not only with local authorities, but with the National Rivers Authority, which will need to approve the proposals before a licence can be granted to permit the two generators to extract water from and discharge water into the Humber. Other consultations have been undertaken during the drafting and preview stages of the Bill. Where necessary, the proposals in the Bill have been amended to provide appropriate safeguards as requested by interested parties, or appropriate undertakings have been given.

The following organisations have already been consulted as a result, and there has been no further correspondence from British Telecom since December 1989. The Yorkshire electricity board has said that none of its apparatus will be affected and British Gas has said that no gas apparatus will be affected. The British Coal Corporation confirmed on 23 January 1990 that it was content. As for Anglian Water plc, an undertaking to Anglian Water Services Limited has been agreed and an executed document is awaited. The Nature Conservancy Council, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Associated British Ports, Humber Oil Terminals Trustees Limited, Associated Petroleum Terminals (Immingham), and the National Rivers Authority have all been consulted. None have any objections.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Private Bills go through a certain procedure; there are advertisements in the newspapers that the Bill is proceeding through the House and the public are advised of how they can gain access to its proceedings, but I know from my experience of local government that the vast majority of the public in the affected area may be unaware that the Bill is going through the House, and even if they are aware of it they are at a loss to understand how to go about voicing their concerns about it. I accept the hon. Gentleman's statement that the national interested parties have been made aware of the Bill, but perhaps the general public are unaware of its implications. I know of at least one previous Bill whose effects were unknown to the public.

Mr. Knapman: I am surprised to hear that, because among the bodies that I have stated have no objection are Glanford borough council and the Labour-controlled county council. I should have thought that they would not have reached their decision before ascertaining local opinion. If the hon. Gentleman is telling me that those councils, most of whose members belong to his party, have not taken the opportunity to find out what public opinion is, something is wrong. I do not believe that he thinks, on further reflection, that that is so.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Does my hon. Friend agree that, far from trying to circumvent normal planning procedures, were it not for the Humber Conservancy Act 1905, if the promoters of the Bill had applied for planning consent in the usual way it would have been granted to them? It is only because of the 1905 Act that my hon. Friend has had to bring the matter to the House today.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The 1905 Act was passed to extend and amend Acts of 1852 and of 1899 which conferred further powers on the commissioners. The original Acts were passed to draw a uniform development line in the river beyond which tidal works could not extend. The purpose of the 1905 Act was to protect the river regime and navigation on the river. It conferred powers on the commissioners to dredge the river and to carry out other works to assist and improve navigation. So the commissioners can exercise certain powers but not others. The 1905 Act mentions private Acts of Parliament being required, which is why we are here tonight—so my hon. Friend was absolutely correct.

The Humber Conservancy Acts were enacted to confer powers on the commissioners for the protection of the river regime and of navigable waters. Subject to the provisions of the 1905 Act, no person may make or form any recess, dock bed for boat or barges, basin, pier or jetty, landing place, quay or embankement wall or other works on the foreshore or bed of the Humber between the river lines and high water mark. The only way in which the prohibitions in the 1905 Act can be overcome is by the promotion of a further Act of Parliament—hence the need for this Bill and this revival motion.

The House has already given approval to the laying of pipes in the Humber—when it approved the July 1972 Act. Unfortunately, that Act gave approval for pipes which are longer than necessary for the current power station developments. So the design of the 1972 cooling waterworks cannot be optimised. Further, Associated British Ports would require the 1972 works to be lowered should it be required at some future date to dredge the river as part of its statutory duties. Indeed, the 1972 Act was designed to give the then CEGB powers to lay pipes in the Humber for a much larger 4,000 MW power station and it laid down in some detail the length of the cooling water works permitted. The Act allowed for two works extending from the shore into the river in a north-easterly direction for a distance of new fewer than 530 yds or 486 m and terminating in an intake of 780 yds or 715 m, terminating in an outfall.

The Act allowed these intake and outfall works to be moved vertically and laterally within the limits of deviation but regrettably it prohibited any substantial alteration, including any substantial reduction in the lengths of the pipes. By comparison, under the 1989 Bill the longest specified intake would be only 390 m and the longest specified outfall only 290. As a result, the obligations of the 1972 Act would require the companies to build pipes that would extend and intrude further into the river Humber than is required, and longer pipes would involve the companies in much greater construction costs. In addition, section 35 of the 1972 Act gave consent, under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, for the works if they were commenced within five years of the passing of the Act. Those powers have now expired.

National Power and PowerGen intend to build combined cycle gas turbine stations which, like any other power stations, need cooling water works. National Power is building a station of 650 MW and PowerGen two stations of 450 MW each. These stations will use indirect cooling works and will need much less water than if they used direct cooling methods such as those proposed under the works in the 1972 Act. The system of indirect cooling ensures that there is less environmental impact on the river Humber than would result from direct cooling works.

The indirect cooling system will involve water being passed through the condensers and cooled by air using

[Mr. Knapman]

cooling towers with the same water, which is then recirculated. Only the water evaporated in the cooling towers and a small quantity of purge water is required to be replaced, therefore. So the combination of indirect cooling and combined cycle gas turbine technology means that requirements for cooling water are significantly reduced. The Killingholme development will require only about 5 per cent. of the water used for direct cooling at existing power stations.

Mr. Redmond: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman's flow, but I cannot understand why he is promoting this Bill. I could find no reason why he should in the Register of Members' Interests. How did he come to draw the short straw and end up promoting this Bill?

Mr. Knapman: The answer is that I am a man of many parts and many talents.

Dr. Michael Clark: It is important that we fully understand what my hon. Friend is proposing. Will he confirm that the 1972 Act contained proposals for various works which were considerably longer and deeper than the works proposed in this Bill, and that due to the wording of the 1972 Act those works cannot be contracted, shortened or made smaller in any way? This Bill will enable the works to be diminished as compared with those proposed in 1972.

Mr. Knapman: I can confirm all that my hon. Friend says. The outfalls anticipated in the 1972 Act are approximately double the length of those that are now proposed. That is good environmentally and commercially and in every other sense. It is therefore difficult to see why there are objections to the Bill.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I am becoming confused about the hon. Gentleman's proposals. Perhaps he could assist. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is presenting a revival motion to the House.

Mr. Moss: That is correct.

Mr. Eadie: If the Bill is approved, it will require a Second Reading. Is that correct?

Mr. Moss: That is correct.

Mr. Eadie: That assists the House to some extent. I do not quarrel with the way in which the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) presents his case, but he gives the House the impression that the revival motion is it, so to speak.

Mr. Knapman: I understand that the Chairman of Ways and Means is presenting the motion, and I am trying to show hon. Members who object to the Bill the folly of their ways. The Bill has absolutely nothing to do with coal or with the choice of fuel. I fear that it is a mundane Bill dealing with certain types of inlets to and outlets from the Humber to the power stations which are already being constructed. I should love to talk about coal and about the paper produced by the Labour party which says that we should rely almost entirely on coal, but if I did so I should immediately be ruled out of order.

Mr. Eadie: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is the hon. Gentleman entitled to say how the debate should be conducted and to lay down strictures? He is certainly entitled to articulate his opinion and his interpretation of the motion that he presents, but it is for the Chair to determine the conduct of the debate. I seek guidance on the matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The Bill has not yet been debated in the House. As the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) says, we are debating a revival motion and comments must be related to that. As the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) is introducing the motion, and as the Bill has not yet been debated in the House, I thought it right to give him reasonable latitude to explain the background to the motion. That is why I am giving him more than the customary flexibility.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): It is not often that I smell a rat in this place, but I smell one now.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): The hon. Gentleman used that line during the debate on the Associated British Ports (No. 2) Bill.

Mr. Haynes: Yes, because I smelt a rat then too. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is also involved in this. There are a number of faces in the House which are familiar to such debates. The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) mentioned PowerGen. Is he aware that, in its magazine, PowerGen said that it would get this approved by August last year? What have these familiar faces been up to? My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) was right when he said that the hon. Member for Stroud had drawn the short straw. He is pouring out a load of rubbish and we have to put up with it.

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman is right in only one respect—that he has to put up with it.

The Bill is in five parts, but I shall not take the House through all of them in any detail. Hon. Members may be grateful for that, but of course on Second Reading I may be forced to speak at some length. Part I deals with the preliminaries and gives details of the phrases used in the Bill. Part II details the works involved. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members had spent 10 minutes reading part II of the Bill, they would not be so excited.

Schedule 4 details all the works that National Power would be given power to construct and provides for three intakes and three outfalls of modest length compared with the long ones proposed in the 1972 Bill. Schedule 5 details the rights given to PowerGen to construct works. It has similar rights for works Nos. 7 to 12.

Part III gives the power to acquire land. That is entirely normal and largely in accordance with the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965. Part IV is the crux of the matter. It contains the protective provisions for other bodies which are interested in the Bill and which have made no objection whatever. Under schedule 25 is the Humber Bridge board and under schedule 26 is Associated British Ports.

Mr. Redmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Knapman: The hon. Gentleman is likely to make his own speech, but I shall give way to him once again.

Mr. Redmond: The hon. Gentleman has said several times that the people who were consulted have no

objections. When did the promoters of the Bill meet the various bodies to discuss amendments to take account of objections? Has PowerGen or National Power given any money to meet certain requirements of objectors?

Mr. Knapman: Not to my knowledge, for the simple reason that until the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) objected to the Bill no one else had objected to it. Of course it went through the other place and therefore the question of objection does not arise.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my hon. Friend confirm that no one objected because the battle about the type of power station to be built and whether it should be gas fired, oil fired or nuclear powered is over? A decision has been taken and those with coal mining interests who seek to delay proceedings on this revival motion only deprive the whole of the north-east, and Humberside in particular, of badly needed power. Power stations have to be justified, but that argument is over and it is pointless to talk about cooling water which all power stations have to use.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend is right. Not only would other forms of power station require greater amounts of water to be abstracted from the Humber, but in 1972 there was something of a storm when an oil-fired station was proposed. Subsequent happenings led to proposals for a gas-fired station. In early 1991 people are still fighting the battles that were fought in 1972 and no doubt the Opposition are still fighting many of the battles of the 1930s.

As I have said, part IV of the Bill is the crux of the matter. It contains the protective provisions and touches on the intervention of the hon. Member for Don Valley. It mentions the Humber Bridge Board and Associated British Ports and more recently the British Coal Corporation. That is a summary of the Bill.

The progress of the Bill is as follows. It was promoted successfully through the other place, despite a challenge from the Coalfied Communities Campaign. It is important to note that it did not allege that the proposals in the Bill were in any way defective, but said that the generation of electricity from gas would have a consequential effect on its members' welfare. That objection was defeated in Committee in the other place on 10 May 1990. Therefore, the Bill was placed before an unopposed Lords Committee on 24 May and received its formal Third Reading on 18 June. The House of Commons received the Bill on the same day. It was formally tabled and blocked, as I have described.

I see no reason why the Bill should have been blocked, as my hon. Friends have said, and I hope that with the information that I have given the House will see its way clear to pass this revival motion.

7.30 pm

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): The hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) said glibly that there was nothing dangerous or difficult in the Bill as it related to the generation of electricity. I beg to differ. We cannot ignore the fact that these power stations will be powered by gas. The suggestion that they might be powered by nuclear energy caused quite a stir. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) made strong representations on that.

Mr. Moss: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the Secretary of State has given clearance, under the Electricity Act 1989, for two power stations burning gas to be on the Killingholme site, and that this motion has nothing whatever to do with nuclear power?

Mr. Buckley: As my hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) said, the Secretary of State was acting illegally because, under the European regulations, it was illegal for him to give permission for power stations to generate electricity by gas. I suspect that the Bill has been delayed to allow the Government the opportunity to persuade the EEC to withdraw its reservations about using gas to generate electricity.

The hon. Member for Stroud said that if we delayed the Bill or opposed it so strongly that we defeated it we would deprive the north-east of much-needed energy. However, my understanding is that the north-east is quite well endowed with electricity and that the shortage of power is in the south. The Government and other organisations have urged us to reduce our electricity demands, so it is more likely that we shall have over-capacity than shortage of capacity in electricity generation.

We had a long debate on another private Bill concerned with the use of the Humber to import large tonnages of coal. The Humber is becoming an increasingly important and busy estuary to the extent that there may be danger to shipping . I do not suggest that the power stations have anything to do with shipping, but they do have something to do with the use of the Humber estuary, which is important.

The situation is not as clear as the hon. Member for Stroud claimed. He spoke about depriving the Humber estuary area of much-needed employment. I could understand it if an hon. Member representing that area made that point, but I cannot understand why the hon. Member for Stroud made it. While it would not affect his constituency, the project would affect my constituency and those of other hon. Members, and, in particular, it would affect employment in the area.

Conservative Members may dismiss, off the cuff, our arguments in favour of the use of coal as a major generating source. However, although the project may result in a few jobs for the area, our constituents will lose jobs because of the change in the generation of electricity from solid fuel. Conservative Members should understand that we make our points on the basis of the interest of our constituents. There is no joy in our constituents losing thousands of jobs while the Killingholme project creates a few jobs, whether in short-term construction or long-term generation.

Mr. Knapman: I repeat that the Bill is not about which type of power is used to generate electricity. It is purely about pipes into and from the Humber. That is the point of the Bill. Therefore, employment in the hon. Gentleman's constituency is not affected by the Bill.

Mr. Buckley: It has a direct effect on the constituents whom I represent because the proposed power stations will be powered by gas rather than solid fuel.

In a debate on energy and generation, we should talk about the consequences of using gas as a major producer of electricity. It could have economic, employment and balance of payments consequences. The short-term thinking by the Government and the promoters of the Bill,

[Mr. Buckley]

on behalf of PowerGen and National Power, leads them to say that there are no significant consequences in converting to the production of electricity by gas.

Mr. Eadie: It is remarkable that attempts to circumscribe the debate have been made. My hon. Friend is showing the impact of the Bill. Does he agree that there has been a change since the Bill was first mooted and since the first attempts to push it through the House? I recall telling the House in a previous debate that , when I met the Norwegian commanders in NATO, I asked them what would happen if a conflict broke out in the North sea and what consequences it would have for the oil and gas installations. They told me that the installations could not be defended. As a strategic aspect is now involved, because we may soon be involved in a war in the Gulf, the situation has changed since the House last addressed the subject.

Mr. Buckley: I take my hon. Friend's point. The impact of the Bill will be more far-reaching than the hon. Member for Stroud has suggested. He is talking about inputs and outtakes of water from the Humber and short pipes and long pipes. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) spoke about drawing the short straw rather than the long pipe, and the hon. Gentleman is suffering from that. I do not want to lumber the hon. Member with this, but he is not wrestling with the short pipe.

Mr. Dickens: PowerGen and National Power have given undertakings to honour their contracts as large buyers of British coal up until 1993. Subsequently, they expect to be major buyers of British coal as long as negotiations lead to a commercially sensible conclusion. I do not see why that should end. British Coal would still be the biggest supplier to those organisations.

Mr. Buckley: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, which is relevant to the argument that I am advancing on behalf of my constituents. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting, however, that the two power stations could be built within a three-year contract? That is the contract that British Coal has with National Power and PowerGen, and it is linked to a certain tonnage of coal. I accept that my constituents have an interest in investment in British Coal——

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Perhaps my hon. Friend will remind the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) that evidence was given to the Select Committee on Energy by the Central Electricity Generating Board that it would like to import up to 10 million tonnes of foreign coal through the ports on the east coast.

Mr. Buckley: We are, of course, talking about gas. A Bill dealing with the importation of coal has passed through the House and the consequences for the coal industry of that measure will be considerable. We are talking about an alternative fuel—gas—that will offer security and continuity of supply. Perhaps gas will not provide the guarantees for which some Conservative Members hope.

Some of the gas supplied from the North sea is coming from the Norwegian sector. If power stations are turning towards gas, the increased demand will be met by the Norwegian sector, not the British sector. Conservative Members have tried to talk down the consequences of the Bill, but we must consider the long-term consequences if the Government decide that gas-fired power generation is something that should be expanded. What would be the consequences for gas supply if we started building gas-powered generating stations along estuaries? Given the Gulf crisis, much of our imported supply would come from politically vulnerable areas. In the long term, much of our gas supply might have to come from the Soviet Union, for example, which has had recent experience of——

Mr. Moss: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain how we are to be supplied with gas from the Soviet Union when there is no pipeline across the North sea.

Mr. Buckley: The hon. Gentleman's intervention illustrates the limited knowledge of Conservative Members. Europe is linked to the Soviet Union by a major gas supply pipe.

There is a shortfall in electricity supply in the south-east of the United Kingdom, not the north-east. A gas supply link between the United Kingdom and Europe would be a requirement if gas-fired power stations were situated in the south-east. It would be convenient to be linked to a major supply of gas from the Urals, for example.

Another major supply of gas would come from Algeria, which is another area of political difficulty, especially when we consider the long-term supply of gas, which will have a significant effect on future energy supplies generally to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moss: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. He is saying that with the Gulf crisis, or a Gulf war, we shall not have enough gas in the short to medium term and that we shall have to import it from the Soviet Union through a non-existent pipeline or import from Algeria by sea, presumably in liquefied form. Is he not aware that it was said in evidence to the Select Committee on Energy that there is about 10 GW of capacity from the known reserves of British Gas and that that could be used to produce electricity over and above the current demand of the country as a whole through the civilian subscribers to British Gas?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are dealing with a revival motion, and hon. Members must address their remarks to that.

Mr. Buckley: I strayed from the motion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I was concerned about the long-term consequences if two power stations are dependent on North sea gas for their power generation. That is relevant to the energy policy that is being outlined for the future. I see that the sponsor, the hon. Member for Stroud, is receiving another briefing from his adviser, the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark). I understand that the hon. Member for Stroud was prompted earlier in the debate. It is good to receive expert advice from Conservative Members who are mindful of the problems that we face.

Mr. Moss: It is good advice.

Mr. Buckley: It may be good advice.

The Bill seeks to amend or change earlier proposals. It is——

Dr. Michael Clark: The 1972 legislation contained a proposal to build a 4,000 MW oil-fired power station. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about employment in his constituency. I understand also that the coal lobby wants to ensure that as much coal is burnt as possible. It is proposed now that there should be a maximum of 2,000 MW of gas-fired generation. That is only half of that which was proposed in 1972. I accept that the 1972 proposal was based on non-coal-fired generation, as is the current proposal. I repeat, however, that the current proposal is only half the non-coal proposal of 1972. It is possible that that is the reason for a Labour-controlled local authority in the area in question being in favour of the proposal. Less electricity will be produced than that which would have been generated if the 1972 proposal had been implemented, and there will be more scope for more coal to be burnt elsewhere.

Mr. Buckley: I am grateful to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Energy for the expert information that he has given to the House. The hon. Gentleman has given support to my argument. The need to increase generation in the north-east is not as valid as Conservative Members have claimed. I accept that the 1972 proposal of 4,000 MW has been reduced by 50 per cent. That means that an increase in energy supply is not justified in terms of the 1972 legislation.

Mr. Redmond: The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) lost me in his intervention. He suggested that a reduction from 4,000 to 2,000 MW would be beneficial because that would enable us to burn more coal elsewhere. I oppose the carry-over motion because of the impact that the Bill will have on the country generally. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree with me that there is no national power policy or energy policy. We are living from hand to mouth, and that is why my hon. Friends and I are concerned about the future. Perhaps my hon. Friend will tell the House whether he agrees that there should be a national energy policy to replace the prevailing market forces.

Mr. Buckley: My hon. Friend emphasises the main point of my argument, which is that the Bill represents a slipshod approach to Britain's energy supply problem on which the Government have no short-term or long-term policy. We seem to be basing our requirements on imported energy. That is ludicrous when one considers the abundance of energy to which this country has had access over the past decade. We were in the forefront of developing nuclear energy, and we had the bonanza of North sea oil, together with an abundance of coal reserves and North sea gas as well.

As to North sea gas reserves, which are fairly extensive, if we substantially increase our consumption from that source, we shall increasingly come to depend in the near future on other sources of gas supply.

Although I acknowledge the points made by those who support the carry-over motion, the effects will be more far reaching than the length of a pipe into the estuary and the amount of water that will flow through it. The stations will have an impact on long-term thinking about this nation's energy's supplies.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

7.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): It may be helpful if I intervene briefly at this stage to give the Government's general view of the Bill and of the revival motion in particular. I promise my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) that I will not speak long enough to exclude him from contributing to the debate.

The works authorised by the Bill will form an integral part of two new gas-fired power stations that are to be constructed by National Power and PowerGen on Humberside. They are among the first of a new generation of gas-fired stations that offer certain efficiency and environmental advantages. Such stations are quicker and cheaper to construct, and the Government see no objection to them on environmental grounds. In fact, in terms of global warming, there may be advantages in generating electricity, at least in part, by burning more gas.

As the House may know, a gas-fired power station produces virtually no sulphur dioxide and only about one quarter of the nitrogen oxides and about one half of the carbon dioxide emissions for the same electrical output as an equivalent coal-fired power station. As we believe it probable that there will be an increase in global atmospheric temperatures due to higher concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, it is obviously important that we find ways in the years ahead of stabilising and perhaps reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Dr. Michael Clark: I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Minister must take a neutral stance in respect of the Bill, but is not he being slightly unfair when he says that the Government have no objections to the stations on environmental grounds? Would not it be fairer to say that, on environmental grounds, the Government welcome the burning of gas rather than coal?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is not my Bill, but I will indicate my position at the end of these remarks. As the environment has been mentioned several times, I thought it proper to give just an outline of the Government's attitude. I have already indicated that, in terms of protecting the global atmosphere, the burning of gas offers certain advantages over other fossil fuels.

Mr. Redmond: The technology is available to reduce toxic emissions from coal-fired stations, but a softly-softly approach is being adopted because of the cost of adopting it. Perhaps the Minister would care to comment on the part that gas could play in the Bill, in respect of long-term requirements and a national energy policy. I understand that the price of coal has been pegged in relative terms to inflation in order to maintain a market for coal within the generation game. However, the price of electricity to the consumer has shot up, and it now bears no relation to the generators' costs. What is being done with those profits? Why are they not being ploughed back into energy generation by coal and into developing methods for reducing toxic emissions? That would produce genuine good, and create real competition between the various forms of energy.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Each form of energy generation offers its own balance of advantages and disadvantages. One advantage of gas over coal is that it produces less carbon dioxide for every unit of electricity. However, I

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

agree with the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) that it is important that British Coal finds ways of burning coal more cleanly—and we fully support any efforts made in that direction.

I may say in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) that the global environment is not the only consideration, and that gas offers other advantages. It can be piped direct to the power station from the source, without the requirement for road or rail transport of fuel or of the resulting ash.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister is merely repeating the brief that we have all received from PowerGen about the advantages of the proposal. Given the question put to him by the hon. Member for Rocford (Dr. Clark), the Minister has a responsibility and a duty to be objective. The hon. Member for Rochford tried to compel the Minister to declare that the Government really prefer gas-generated energy. In the interests of objectivity, and in order that the House may be properly informed, the Minister will surely agree that if flue gas desulphurisation equipment were installed in coal-fired stations, that would make them environmentally friendly. Does the Minister agree that it is not for British Coal but for the power station operators to decide whether flue gas desulphurisation is to be installed?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I trust that the hon. Gentleman is not accusing me of being hostile to coal in principle. I do not have an absolute preference for gas. Nor do I disapprove of coal, in principle. However, it is a fact of chemistry that burning a unit of coal produces more carbon dioxide than does an equivalent unit of gas. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that there are technical and chemical ways of extracting sulphur dioxide from coal emissions, for example—and we are most anxious to promote that technology.

I am unwilling to go into too much detail about the substance of the Bill. If the revival motion is approved there may be an opportunity for us to debate the issue at greater length at another time. Also, the Government see no objection on efficiency grounds—indeed we envisage certain advantages—to building some additional gas-fired power stations, because combined cycle gas turbine generators will operate at about 50 per cent. efficiency, compared to 38 per cent. efficiency from the best coal-burning power stations available at present.

Mr. Michael Welsh: I thank the Minister for giving way. Is it efficient to have a gas power station, which may operate well, if a couple of pits have to be closed, leaving coal which can never be removed as the shafts are completely filled in? In the long term, is that efficiency, or is it bad planning?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am unwilling to get into a general debate about the coal industry—an industry which I am most anxious to see prosper—because we are debating a revival motion. However, I look forward to debating the future of the British coal industry with the hon. Gentleman at some future date.

I must return to the point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy has already approved the application to build these two power stations on Humberside. Therefore, it is obvious that we should also approve the application to provide the ancillary works. In the light of that, the Government hope that the House will approve the revival motion to enable the Bill to proceed to a Second Reading at another time.

8.1 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I do not wish to keep the House too long. We welcome the Minister's commitment, and the Government's full support, for British Coal becoming more environmentally conscious through clean coal burning, although I think that that is the first time that I have heard that said. Perhaps the new Minister could explain to British Coal why, for the past few years, it has received no more than 1·5 per cent. of the research and development budget of millions that the Government have put into nuclear and other energy industries. Perhaps he could also explain why last year, when the Grimethorpe project sought help from the public sector, as directed by the Government, and received about £5 million from a Scandinavian company which later pulled out, the project was on the brink of collapse. It was one of the most advanced projects for clean coal burning in the world. I hope that the Minister, in his new post, will consider these issues, because they have worried many hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I am also interested to hear that the Government see no objection to this development. I wish that we were discussing this matter after having had a debate on the Government's intentions for energy. Once again, we are debating a private Bill from a troubled area of Britain. We must have spent more time debating Killingholme than any other place in Britain. Tonight we are again discussing Killingholme and its effect on a national energy strategy, but we have been unable to discuss that strategy. I do not want to go into too much detail tonight because if the carry-over motion is approved we shall want to consider the absence of a national energy strategy and its effect on the present proposals. However, I must point out that I find it difficult to talk about a car exhaust without referring to the internal combustion engine, and I should have thought that most people would have the same problem.

The Killingholme Generating Station (Ancillary Powers) Act 1972, which referred to outlay pipes from a power station which was to be built on the site, stopped the development. Therefore, we must in some small degree discuss developments on the site.

I speak on behalf of the Labour party when I say that we are reluctant to give our approval to the Bill, as it will enable the construction of two gas turbine generating stations without the House having given due consideration to the implications of increasing gas generation of electricity.

World supplies of gas are plentiful at the moment—we all know that—but they are finite. More important, in the short term, Britain's supplies of gas are limited. At current levels of consumption, United Kingdom gas will last between 25 and 40 years. If we allow gas to become a major generator of electricity, adding another 30 or 40 per cent. to present United Kingdom gas demand, we shall soon find ourselves dependent on gas imports—whether from Norway or the Soviet Union, we shall have to wait and see. Norway has a wide choice of alternative purchasers for its gas. Germany has taken an option on the Troll field and it is likely that we shall be considering repairing the existing European pipeline and building another and importing our gas from Russia.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) said in an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) that there was no gas pipeline from Russia or northern Europe into this country at present. A number of years ago the Energy Select Committee—the Chairman of the Committee is present—produced a gas depletion policy document, and it was, and still is, the only obvious choice to couple into northern Europe when Britain's gas runs out. It is very likely that, out of all the gas producers that we know of at present and can envisage in the future, Russia will be a major exporter of gas to this country. That has major implications for us all and anyone with any knowledge of energy worldwide will know that that will be the case in the not-too-distant future if we start to generate electricity from gas. That was prevented until late last year when the EC directive that covered this country was withdrawn without any debate in the House about the effect that its withdrawal would have on our energy policies.

It has been reported that National Power has secured a supply for Killingholme A station from the Caister field, off the Lincolnshire coast, in the southern North sea. It has further been reported that that field has gas to last for only seven or eight years. The Minister said that this development would have little effect on the country, that gas would be piped direct to the station and that the Government envisaged no problems. However, combined cycle gas turbines have a lifetime which is much longer than seven or eight years. Where will the gas come from when the Caister field runs out? What will be the cost of gas at that time?

Mr. Redmond: At the moment there is a big gas sale on, encouraging home owners to install gas. However, one needs to consider the long term, perhaps 30 years from now. Reference has been made to gas consumption. If gas begins to run out, the law of supply and demand will prevail, prices will escalate and, even though power-generated gas stations would cease production, house owners would be required to meet the escalating cost of gas.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend is right. I know that the current war situation is on all our minds at the moment, especially as the 15 January deadline is looming within the next 24 hours. What will happen to gas prices? They are tied to world oil prices. I hope that it does not happen, and I am sure that many hon. Members share that wish, but if war breaks out in the Gulf there could be a massive increase in gas prices within a few weeks. I hope that that is not the case, but we are vulnerable to that.

What will happen in seven or eight years' time when the gas in the Caister field has run out? Where will these two gas turbines be supplied from, and at what cost to the consumer?

Mr. Moss: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Caister field supplying National Power's plant at Killingholme. Is he not aware that the gas in that field is off-spec—that it has a very high nitrogen content and cannot be used in normal British Gas conditions for the purposes of the domestic consumer? The gas is not coming out of the reserve for domestic consumption; it is highly specialised and its use in a power station is probably the best possible.

Mr. Barron: I do not deny that, but, according to press reports, seven or eight years' gas supply is going into those generators. Let me repeat my question: what will happen when that is gone? The question will have to be answered at some stage, preferably by the Minister.

Mr. Eadie: The question of gas importation is important. We know that, when British Gas appeared before the energy studies group, it said that it planned to have 8 to 10 GW of power station generation, basing its projection on the expectation that much of the gas would come from the Soviet Union.

As my hon. Friend has suggested, since we last discussed the Bill the position has changed dramatically. If a Gulf war breaks out, the Soviet Union will be in a powerful position in energy terms: not only will it have all that gas, but it will be the largest oil producer in Europe. The House should give some consideration to our indigenous energy sources.

Mr. Barron: Given his years of service as both an energy Minister and an Opposition spokesman, my hon. Friend knows the position even better than I do. He served in the Government at the time of the oil price increases in the 1970s. We have not yet discussed all the outside influences on our national energy resources.

Other European utilities—although there is still talk of building combined-cycle gas power stations—will, they say, use gas only for peak-load operation; there is no plan for a major, irrreversible shift to gas burners. The number of permissions apparently granted by the Department of Energy leads us to believe that it will take such action. We have not been told, however, whether the two power stations will operate the base-load system, thus using much more gas than peak-load operation would require—meeting two or three hours' demand per day, sometimes only in the late winter.

The hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) mentioned the 1972 Act. That is indeed relevant, but I should point out that we are talking not about going from 4,000 to 2,000 MW, but about going from nought to 2,000. The people with whom I negotiated as a trade unionist before I entered the House would have loved that sort of logic: "You have won half of it anyway; you are giving away 2,000 MW." That is the way in which we should look at the position, although the other way may seem a nice mathematical method of arguing for gas generation.

Mr. Moss: As has been said many times, the hon. Gentleman is understood to support a national energy policy, controlled and planned from the centre. Has it not occurred to him that in 1972, when the application for the 4,000 MW oil-fired station was first put in, the planning had been carried out with the CEGB—perhaps by a Labour Government in 1970 or before—but the power station was never built? Why should a wonderful national energy policy plan a 4,000 MW station that is never built? So much for a national energy policy in the Labour party.

Mr. Barron: If we are to answer such questions, we should perhaps consider what happened in the middle east in 1973. We have still not learnt the lessons.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The planning for the 1972 project took into consideration the then state of manufacturing industry and the accompanying need for energy resources. With the collapse of manufacturing industry since 1979, the position is different.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend is entirely right.

It can be argued that a form of national power and electricity generation has operated, on and off, for a number of years. It can also be argued that most Governments, whatever their political colour, have tended to get it wrong, which is why it has been in a mess for more than 20 years. That does not mean, however, that we should not think things out before producing spatchcock measures to build generation plants. We should stop making the mistakes that we have made in the past; we should take a more national and strategic approach.

The country already faces a deficit in the energy balance of payments. In the first 10 months of 1990, Britain had a fuel trade deficit amounting to the equivalent of the cost of 2·2 million tonnes of coal. We live in an energy-rich country. How much larger can we afford to allow that deficit to become—not just in the short term, but permanently? We should not consider the cost of building the generators in relation to seven or eight years' supply from a particular field in the southern North sea; we should bear it in mind that in 10 years' time, when we still want to use the generators, we may be having to import our supply. That, in the end, is the real cost, not to the company but to the nation.

The increased use of gas for electricity generation will also have an impact on its price. At present, gas prices are relatively low. All the indications are that, if gas is diverted to electricity generation, the price will rise dramatically, and that will have an impact on both domestic gas and domestic electricity users, as well as on the generators themselves.

Gas is still a premium fuel and to burn it to produce electricity is a wasteful use of such a resource. Before enabling the two major generating companies to build gas turbine generators, the House should consider these important questions. Once again, a private Bill is being used to determine major strategic energy decisions which should be made by the Department of Energy and by the Ministers involved, regardless of their political colour. We have said all along, and will continue to say, that we want the matter to be debated in a proper fashion. We hope that, at some stage, the Government will find the time and the courage to do that, rather than adopting the spatchcock option of private Bills.

8.18 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): First, I take up the final point made by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). We must get this right: the Bill is before the House only because last year the Government gave their approval first to PowerGen and then to National Power for the power stations to be built. Opposition Members should recognise that the power stations are being built at this very minute, and that one will be completed within months, if not weeks.

Mr. Knapman: Let us suppose, briefly, that every word uttered by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) was correct. Would not the result of the Opposition's proposals be the denial to most power stations of the intake and outlet pipes that they obviously need?

Mr. Brown: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his clarification of very difficult technical details when he opened the debate. I believe that it is wrong for the motives of any hon. Member to be questioned when we are considering a private Bill. Every hon. Member present in the Chamber has a constituency reason for wanting to discuss the revival motion. Furthermore, all my hon. Friends have an interest in energy, which goes back to their membership of the Select Committee on Energy. My hon. Friends should be commended by my constituents for taking such an interest in our national energy industry. They should not be criticised and carped at by Opposition Members.

On 26 February 1986, nearly five years ago, I said to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you were in the Chair at the time, that the CEGB planned, through its local agency Nirex, to dump nuclear waste in my constituency. I said to you that so long as I was Member of Parliament for Brigg and Cleethorpes that would not happen, and it did not happen. Only because that battle was won is my constituency in the fortunate position of having not a nuclear waste dump but two power stations, one being built by National Power and the other by PowerGen. In 1987 my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) had the good sense to abandon the ridiculous proposal to dump nuclear waste in my constituency. Having won that battle, we now have two private enterprise power stations being built, one of which is nearly completed.

To return to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud in his intervention, what would be the effect if Opposition Members were successful in their opposition to the revival motion or if they successfully opposed the Bill on Second or Third Reading? The effect would be that the Labour party would say to the public, "Two power stations in Michael Brown's parliamentary constituency of Brigg and Cleethorpes will be completed by the time of the next general election, and we are proud to tell the people of the United Kingdom that we shall play our part in preventing those power stations from coming into operation." I shall remind the parliamentary Labour candidate in my constituency, Ian Cawsey, who will have to live with the remarks made by the hon. Member for Rother Valley, that he has had yet another millstone strung around his neck. It was bad enough when the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) said that if the Labour party won the next election it would abandon the Immingham docks project. Now it wants to kill the jobs at Killingholme after the power stations have been built.

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman said that last year planning permission for the two power stations was granted by the Department of Energy without debate. I believe that that was wrong. Would the hon. Gentleman set about building a four-bedroomed detached house without planning permission?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has not done his homework. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy gave National Power and PowerGen permission to build the power stations, subject to their obtaining planning permission. National Power and PowerGen went to Glanford borough council and Humberside county council and said, "The Secretary of State for Energy has allowed us to bring this project to you. Will you give us planning permission?" As it is a very go-ahead planning authority, Glanford borough council gave planning permission. There was no objection. I do not think that even a whisper against planning permission being granted

came from the two Labour councillors out of a total of 42 councillors. I believe that they voted for the project. The Labour-controlled Humberside county council—I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) is present as his brother is the leader of the Conservative group on that council—also gave planning permission for the stations. The hon. Member for Rother Valley says that no planning permission was given. Both Glanford borough council and Humberside county council could have told the Secretary of State for Energy where to go after giving approval for the two power stations by denying planning permission, after which there would have had to be an appeal. However, they gave planning permission.

Mr. Barron: Is not planning permission being sought by means of the Bill?

Mr. Brown: Planning permission for the power stations is not the subject of the Bill. The power stations are being built after planning permission was granted by Glanford borough council. One of the power stations will be completed later this year. Planning permission was given for it. The Bill merely enables the power stations to take water out of the river Humber for cooling purposes.

I cannot believe what I am hearing from the Opposition —though perhaps I should, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Labour party believes only in coal, regardless of its price and of how expensive it is for the consumer. The Labour party believes that when the housewife switches on the electric light she ought to pay the price of electricity generated by coal, however high that price may be. That is what the debate is about. The hon. Member for Rother Valley let the cat out of the bag when he said, in effect, "I don't care whether you build nuclear, oil-fired or gas-fired power stations—all I want is for the consumer in this country to be forced to buy electricity at whatever price the coal miner and the coal industry choose to foist upon him."

Mr. Buckley: The hon. Gentleman misleads the House by suggesting that the Labour party wants electricity to be generated by coal, regardless of other means of electricity generation, but alternative means of electricity generation would deprive my constituents of employment.

Mr. Brown: When it comes to any other product, where constituency interests are not involved, competition and price are the determining factors. If the hon. Gentleman had the misfortune, in his case—though the good fortune in my case—to represent a constituency in which the largest single industry was privately run and where there was competition, he would find that Scunthorpe's steel industry had to face both international and domestic competition and therefore had to become efficient. At the moment the hon. Gentleman has the good fortune to represent a constituency where the largest industry has a monopoly. He wants that monopoly to be maintained, but by defending and upholding that monopoly he does his constituents a disservice in the long run. If there is a mix of energy generation, with one fossil fuel having to compete with another, the coal industry will be able to defend itself far more effectively in the long run, and it will be much more commercially competitive.

Combined cycle gas turbine stations are cheaper and quicker to build than conventional coal-fired stations and are substantially more efficient. Gas is available at an economically competitive price, and as these companies must now answer to a board of directors and to shareholders they would not be building these power stations if they were going to be inefficient or, ultimately, if there was not an opportunity to sell electricity at a cheaper rate.

Gas is in plentiful supply and, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, has considerable environmental advantages over coal. When gas is burned in a combined cycle gas turbine station, about half the carbon dioxide, virtually no sulphur dioxide and a quarter of the nitrogen oxide emissions of a coal-fired station are produced. Therefore, on environmental grounds, my constituency will be at the forefront of producing cheap energy, with an environmental benefit to boot.

Mr. Buckley: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the reduced environmental impact of gas-fired power stations. If that is correct, why did he oppose nuclear power, which has no environmental impact whatever?

Mr. Brown: In 1945, a couple of miles up the road from where I have lived for the past 12 years, 700 acres of land were purchased by the CEGB. The intention was always to use that land for a power station. In 1972, the House went so far as to pass a private Bill giving the CEGB permission to build a power station there. In the 1980s, I said to my constituents, "I oppose this area of land, on which a power station was to be built, being used as a nuclear dump." I also said that if we prevented it being used as a nuclear dump we would have to acknowledge that a power station was to be built on the site. On that basis, I give my full and total support to the Bill. The project will bring jobs to my constituency.

For some reason, the Labour party has got it in for my constituency. It does not like my constituents to have jobs or for them to benefit from reductions in unemployment. Whether it is power plants, port development or whatever, the Labour party does not like any development in my constituency. At the next election, the poor prospective Labour candidate will have a hard time trying to convince my voters that they should vote for him. They certainly will not do so because it would result in my constituency going back to the 17th century. I support the motion and compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud on the way in which he introduced it.

8.32 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am a north-west Member of Parliament, but I am here to support the north-east.

I am pro-nuclear and declare an interest in that respect. I am not crying because the next power station will be driven by a gas turbine, and I am not unfair enough to say that these power stations should not have their cooling water. I wish to say something to the coal-mining interests in the House, because that is what many of the earlier speeches were about. As part of the commitment to British Coal, National Power is retrofitting flue gas desulphurisation plant at Drax power station in Yorkshire. Similarly, PowerGen has submitted consent applications for retrofitting at Ratcliffe on Soar in Nottingham and Ferrybridge C power station in Yorkshire. The availability of FGD plant at some of our coal-fired power stations will reduce the disadvantage of the relatively high sulphur content of British coal.

[Mr. Geoffrey Dickens]

It appears that those two companies are committed to the coal industry, but technology has not been developed sufficiently for orders to be placed immediately for coal-fired power stations. We must get that technology right and therefore——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I do not see that this has anything to do with the motion.

Mr. Dickens: If you had been in the Chamber earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have heard speech after speech on the coal industry and the effect that the motion will have on it. Following your direction, I shall leave that point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) moved the motion well on behalf of National Power and PowerGen. The successor companies to the CEGB have almost completed the two power stations, but a water supply is required to cool them.

In the combined cycle gas turbine, gas is burned in gas turbines and the exhaust heat is used to heat steam to drive a steam turbine. The gas turbines and the steam turbine drive electrical generators. Steam from the turbine gives up its heat energy in the turbine as it expands and its temperature and pressure fall. When as much energy as practicable has been extracted from the steam, it is exhausted at low temperature and the pressure goes directly to a condenser. Cold water, in this case from the river Humber, is passed through the condenser and is used to condense the steam. The water produced is recirculated to the steam boiler and at all times is kept separate from the river water.

Whatever the form of power, whether it was coal fired, oil fired, gas fired or nuclear, it would still have to have cooling facilities. The short pipes into the river Humber would still be necessary. There will be no pollution. It is interesting to note that gas is cleaner than coal. The burning of gas produces no sulphur dioxide, which is a big advantage. A gas-fired power station emits a quarter of the nitrogen oxide and half the carbon dioxide of a coal-fired station. That is the advantage of the two power stations that are nearly completed.

It is important to recall that British Coal stands to gain long contracts from both those power giants. They are committed to the existing contracts until March 1993, and they will negotiate other contracts after March 1993 as long as British Coal produces coal at competitive rates. The way that British Coal is going at the moment, it has every chance of securing those contracts. Its performance is outstanding and I think that it is even surprising itself. *[Interruption.]* I have been passed a note telling me to speak for two hours. It does not really say that.

Mr. Buckley: Is the hon. Gentleman generating gas? This is known as the biggest gas house in the United Kingdom. By speaking for two hours, the hon. Gentleman would contribute to the supply.

Mr. Dickens: I may be speaking hot air, but these two power stations are very important to the people of the north-east, and especially Humberside.

We must remember that a power station must be justified. PowerGen and National Power, the successor companies to the CEGB, would not have forged ahead if the power stations had not been justified. It is a new world now. The power stations must be competitive and the type of generation of power used must be justified. It will not matter if the power stations overproduce because the electricity companies have a statutory obligation to provide power on demand to industry and consumers to keep the lights burning. That was the will of Parliament. The companies have a duty to fulfil that obligation. To do so, they must make sure that power stations are built.

If there is any surplus, it can be fed into the national grid and used elsewhere. The climate in the north-east is more kind at times than it is perhaps in the north-west and the south. Vice-versa, the north-east can take advantage of the power fed into the national grid from other stations. The arrangement is sensible and the power stations are justified. It would be churlish of the Opposition to block the almost completed power stations for the sake of short intake and outlet water pipes to the river Humber. We have heard that there is no pollution involved. The water is kept absolutely separate. I cannot understand the position of Opposition Members, many of whom I have supported on other issues.

I was formerly commercial director of a coal-fired power station and the chairman of an oil company. I am now in the nuclear industry—an interest which I declared earlier. That is why I take such an interest in energy matters and why I have come here tonight to support the people of the north-east and allow them to have the power station which they so richly deserve and need. On that note, I hand over to other hon. Members who wish to speak.

8.41 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): We need to go back to basics in discussing this revival motion. It is obvious from the speeches made by Opposition Members that they have not read the Bill. Nowhere does it mention planning permission or the type of power station. It is simply a Bill to change the wording of the 1972 Act which prescribes pipes of a certain length to the Humber. The Bill simply seeks to replace that length of pipe with shorter pipes to supply the cooling water to the gas generators.

Several points were raised by Opposition Members. The environment and clean coal were mentioned. Hon. Members may be interested in some of the figures on the so-called environmental benefits. Existing coal-burning stations, with 38 per cent. efficiency, pump 125 per cent. more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than a combined cycle gas turbine plant—the type proposed at Killingholme—which has a 50 per cent. efficiency burn and only a 100 per cent. output of carbon dioxide.

The so-called benefits of flue gas desulphurisation have been mentioned. Drax, a 4,000 MW power station, will produce 1·1 million tonnes of gypsum. It needs 0·7 million tonnes of limestone for the process. The limestone comes from Derbyshire and 0·7 million tonnes of it represents about 35,000 lorries with a 20-tonne load crossing from Derbyshire to Drax. That is 673 a week or about 96 a day. If Labour Members believe that those are the benefits of flue gas desulphurisation, I suggest that they examine the problem a little more closely.

The Bill is simple. It is about changing the wording of the 1972 Act to allow new pipes to take in water. The power stations have planning permission. There is no local

opposition to them and, in the case of the PowerGen site, work has already started. We should vote for the revival motion without further ado.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 96, Noes 61.

Division No. 35] **[8.44 pm**

AYES

Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Sir Anthony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mills, Iain
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Malcolm Moss and
Mr. Michael Brown.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Bellotti, David
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Buckley, George J.
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Leadbitter, Ted
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Murphy, Paul
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terence
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Ms. Dawn Primarolo and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill [*Lords*] may, notwithstanding anything in the Standing Orders or practice of this House, proceed with the Bill in the present Session; and the Petition for the Bill shall be deemed to have been deposited and all Standing Orders applicable thereto shall be deemed to have been complied with;

That if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the present Session, the Agents for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by them stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the last Session;

That as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be deemed to have been read the first time and shall be ordered to be read a second time;

That, since no Petitions remain against the Bill, no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the committee;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the last Session.

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Overseas Development and Co-operation

8.56 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I beg to move,

That the draft International Development Association (Ninth Replenishment) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 10th December, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I understand that it will be for the convenience of the House if we debate with this the motion on the Caribbean Development Bank (Further Payments) Order 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: The purpose of the first of these orders is to authorise a contribution of £619 million to the ninth replenishment of the International Development Association, known as IDA. This is the second biggest single commitment from our aid programme after our contribution to the seventh European development fund. We have a high regard for the World bank, of which IDA is a part. It plays a key role in the development process and the United Kingdom has been a firm supporter of IDA since its inception. IDA is by far the world's biggest provider of concessionary finance to developing countries. In the year to June 1990 IDA lending totalled $5·5 billion and in the same period the World bank approved loans totalling just over $15 billion.

IDA was set up in 1960 when it became clear that many countries were too poor to take on conventional World bank loans, which are on quasi-commercial terms. Because IDA terms are highly concessional, it is funded mainly by donors' contributions and not, as with the World bank, by borrowing on the financial markets. But IDA reflows—repayments of earlier loans that go back into the pot to help finance new ones—are becoming an increasingly important supplementary source of funds.

The World bank's goal is to promote economic progress among its borrowers so that they are fully able to turn to the world's financial markets to meet their needs. IDA, in turn, aims to bring its borrowers to the point where their needs can be met by the bank. Many countries have benefited in this way over the years. Former recipients that have graduated out of IDA as their economies have strengthened include Korea, Turkey, Thailand and Ecuador. However, most of the poorest countries of Africa and Asia continue to need substantial and highly concessional aid flows for many years to come. IDA has a key role to play in their development.

IDA resources are also significant for so-called "blend" countries that receive a mix of World bank loans on normal and concessional terms. Such countries include India, Pakistan, China and Nigeria.

Our aid programme is targeted to help achieve sustainable economic and social progress, especially in the poorest countries. Channelling funds through IDA, in collaboration with other donors, is an effective mechanism to advance that policy. At the same time, our substantial and effective bilateral aid programme is focused on the poorest countries. Thus, the funds channelled bilaterally and through IDA are mutually supportive of our central policy objectives.

IDA loans are used mostly for specific projects or programmes within individual countries. In recent years, however, a proportion of IDA resources has been used for non-project lending, mainly structural and sectoral adjustment loans. Adjustment lending of this kind provides vital foreign exchange to help finance essential imports needed to implement economic reform programmes agreed with the international donor community. As the process of adjustment proceeds, we should see a decline in the need to use concessional aid for general balance of payments support. The need will continue, of course, for sector investment and project lending to help sustain the growth that reform programmes are aiming to achieve. Up to 30 per cent. of IDA9 resources may be used for non-project lending, but the impact of the Gulf crisis will almost certainly intensify the need for adjustment efforts in many developing countries.

Our new obligation to IDA is set out fully in the White Paper, CM 1325, but it may be helpful if I comment briefly on the main features. The size and terms of such replenishments are determined through intergovernmental negotiation among interested donor countries. A total of 11·7 billion special drawing rights—about $15 billion—was agreed. Adding in the recycling of repayments on earlier loans, IDA should be able to achieve a lending programme of more than $17 billion over the three years of the replenishment. That is a much better result than we thought possible at the outset and represents a real increase over IDA8. The United Kingdom will contribute 6·7 per cent. of this total—the same share as last time. At the agreed rate of exchange, that means a United Kingdom contribution of £619 million.

We shall pay this sum to IDA by depositing three promissory notes, for equal amounts, over three years from 1990. Those will then be encashed over a longer period, to match spending incurred by IDA as a result of its commitments during the replenishment period. The costs of encashment will be met as they occur, from sums voted for overseas aid.

During the negotiations donors reviewed several policy issues. They underlined the importance of poverty reduction as IDA's central concern, and agreed that greater emphasis should be given to people and their environment. We warmly welcome this. Development will not happen if people remain uneducated and unhealthy and with insufficient access to resources. Development will not be sustainable if we do not take steps to protect our environment. The United Kingdom laid special emphasis on those issues during the negotiations and took the lead in urging the bank to do more to help with the revised tropical forestry action plan. I am also particularly pleased that more attention is to be devoted to trying to bring down the rate of population growth: a better life for all is just not possible if economic growth is outstripped by the growth in population. The prospects for sustainable development are greatly diminished when over-population leads, as it so often does, to environmental degradation.

Donors were also insistent that IDA resources must be used effectively, and that country performance should be an increasingly important factor. Again, we welcome that emphasis. We, the lenders, need to ask whether Government or public institutions are properly addressing the country's needs. Sound economic management, broadly based development, including the reduction of poverty and real efforts towards sustainable long-term developments, are all critical—in other words, good, effective government.

Many donors are above all concerned that IDA resources should be directed towards the poorest countries, particularly in Africa. In IDA8, it was agreed

that up to 50 per cent. of the replenishment should go to Africa. The same share will be kept for IDA9, which I welcome. We are pleased that the needs of the large developing countries in Asia have also been recognised, but it is Africa which continues to face exceptional difficulties. The recurrence of the threat of widespread famine is but one facet of that.

Contrary to what the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said in a news release that I received today, the Gulf crisis is not hindering our famine relief efforts in Africa. Every time that Saddam Hussein refuses to withdraw from Kuwait, developing countries dependent on oil and facing increased oil prices are affected. However, I can assure the hon. Lady and the House that we are ready and prepared, and have made provision to maintain our relief programmes without interruption, come what may in the Gulf. That is extremely important.

Another difficulty is the need for economic reform and adjustment in Africa—a fact which is recognised by an increasing number of countries on the continent. The World bank has taken the lead in providing balance of payments assistance for countries prepared to adopt the necessary policy reforms. We strongly support those reform programmes and we have provided funds on grant terms from our bilateral aid programme to supplement IDA resources in such cases. Indeed, the United Kingdom is at the forefront of international efforts to increase resources available to support economic reform in the low-income, debt-distressed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Under the first stage of the special programme of assistance for sub-Saharan Africa donors pledged a total of $6·3 billion of aid in addition to the finance available from the World bank and the IMF. That special programme is a World bank-led effort to ensure well co-ordinated financial support for the import requirements of economic reform programmes. For our part, we pledged up to £250 million of British bilateral programme aid over the three years of the special programme; that pledge has been fulfilled. A second three-year phase of the special programme has now been agreed and I am aiming to make available at least the same amount of bilateral support.

Measures have also been adopted—the "Toronto terms"—to ease the burden of debt on the poorest countries, mainly in Africa, undertaking economic adjustment. Those measures were first proposed by the United Kingdom. Nineteen countries have already benefited. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, while he was Chancellor, proposed ways of further easing the burden—the "Trinidad proposals". Those would involve a reduction of two thirds—$18 billion—in the stock of debt of the poorest countries. We are now seeking to persuade other creditor countries to accept those proposals.

I referred earlier to the effects of the Gulf crisis, which for most developing countries are severe. Apart from the increase in oil prices, many of those countries are suffering in other ways, notably from the loss of remittances from expatriate workers, plus the problems of reabsorbing those workers into their home economies. Many IDA recipients are seriously affected and will require extra help in this financial year, and beyond. Some countries with average incomes just above the normal upper limit for IDA are amongst those worst hit, and the bank hopes to be able to offer some IDA assistance to several of those latter countries, too. Indeed, it is because the bank is anxious to start helping as soon as possible, and because our agreement to contribute is expected to trigger IDA9's effectiveness, enabling the replenishment to be committed, that we are having this debate rather earlier than has tended to be the case in the past.

The extra assistance will come from a variety of sources, mainly by accelerated use of donor commitments both to IDA9 and to earlier replenishments that are not fully paid up and by voluntary contributions from donors. We expect to be able to help the former. We fully support IDA's central aim of alleviating poverty and its concentration of resources in key areas, especially in agricultural and rural development and in energy.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend tell us something about how we are responding to the famine in Ethiopia and Sudan and the extent to which the programme that she has identified and on which I congratulate her—she has done a tremendous job—will help to alleviate the immediate problem which is receiving so much attention in our press and elsewhere in the world?

Mrs. Chalker: I thank my hon. Friend for that comment. He will know that on 19 December I made a statement to the House announcing an extra £5 million for Ethiopia and Sudan on top of the £56 million spent in 1989 and in 1990 up to that date. I shall visit Ethiopia, all being well, at the end of this month to make a further assessment and to hold discussions with the Government and the relief organisations so that we can work out what further help may be necessary.

Unfortunately, because of the situation in Sudan it will not be possible for me to visit it, but I am in close touch with the non-governmental organisations, which are continuing, despite the pressures that they are under, to do such magnificent work there. We are receiving regular feedback of information on which we shall base future decisions. It will be very much harder to help Sudan, for the awful reason that its Government will not admit to the crisis or to the extent of the famine, and it is possible that they will not allow the food to go to the people who are starving.

As for Ethiopia, I can tell the House today that what was only a hope on 19 December has come to pass, and Massawa port has been opened. The first United Nations shipload of food has gone from Djibouti to that port and has been checked by both sides—by the Ethiopian Government and by the liberation forces. The food is now on its way to Eritrea. We hope that that project will continue well. The southern line is still being used, with food going in from the port of Assab up to Dese and being offloaded on to World Food Programme and other voluntary organisations' lorries to go to northern Wollo and Tigray. The airlift into Asmara has been working and I have put aside more money for it.

Unfortunately, it has been reported to us in the past couple of days that the airport at Asmara has been shelled by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front. We sincerely hope that the shelling will cease and that we shall continue to be able to use Asmara for the airlift at least for the rest of this month, until the running of the boat from Djibouti to Massawa port provides a regular flow of food into Eritrea and northern Tigray. I trust that that brings my hon. Friend up to date——

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): May I press the Minister while she is still on this important topic? Can she give the House any information on what is happening in Somalia, given the chaos there?

Mrs. Chalker: Somalia is a very sad case. Sad to say, we have had to withdraw our staff and advise aid agencies to withdraw, too. I cannot give the right hon. Gentleman up-to-date information at this moment. There is food in the country, but it is bound to run out because while fighting is going on it will not be possible to get it from the point of entry to where the people need it. I am glad to say that our ambassador arrived back in this country safely today; when I have had a chance to talk to him later this week I shall try to put down on paper for the right hon. Gentleman what is happening in Somalia.

I welcome comments made by right hon. and hon. Members about the problems of Africa, because IDA9 will be much concerned with the needs of Africa. One of the critical aspects of the International Development Association is its central aim of alleviating poverty. I am delighted that it is concentrating its resources in key areas such as agriculture, rural development and energy. It is making welcome efforts to tackle the problems of the poorest and especially the poorer, indebted African countries. We also welcome the IDA's role in improving the co-ordination of aid from all sources.

The second order for which we seek parliamentary approval relates to a much smaller but none the less important exclusively regional institution. The purpose of the Caribbean Development Bank (Further Payments) Order 1990 is to provide for an additional subscription not exceeding US $20·9 million to the capital stock of that bank. Britain and Canada were the two non-regional founding members of the CDB and are the largest non-regional shareholders, with 10·44 per cent. each. Over the years we have given the CDB strong support, providing encouragement and guidance as well as technical and financial assistance.

The bank was set up in 1970 to promote economic and social growth in the Caribbean region. There is a hard lending window through which the bank borrows on the international financial markets on the security of capital stock. There is also a soft fund, a special development fund, whose resources are lent on concessional terms mainly to the poorer countries in the region or to those with special difficulties. At its last annual meeting in May the board of governors approved a capital increase of US $200 million of which $40 million will be paid in. The United Kingdom share is the 10·44 per cent. that I mentioned, or US $20·9 million. Of that sum, US $4·2 million will be paid in, equivalent to £2·2 million at the current rate of exchange. Payments will be phased over a number of years.

The CDB is one of the leading regional institutions in the Commonwealth Caribbean. It operates almost entirely with personnel drawn from the region and provides the focus for encouragement and retention of local skills. Its small size and restricted membership and the great disparity in wealth between its borrowing members impose constraints on its operations. We have encouraged the bank's management to improve the efficiency of its operations and not attempt too much. Last year the World bank approved a loan to the CDB for on-lending to smaller Caribbean countries. The World bank's assessment was that, although the CDB has made considerable progress in strengthening its operational and organisational procedures, some institutional weaknesses remained. Therefore, the World bank loan has a strong institution building emphasis which we welcome.

The World bank is the leading development institution and it is at the cutting edge of change for improvement in the social and economic conditions in developing countries. Successive British Governments have supported the World bank group, which includes the International Development Association, and our commitment is as firm as ever. The CDB also plays a valuable role in its region.

I commend both orders authorising additional contributions to these institutions.

9.18 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As the Minister says, the World bank may be a leading development institution, but unfortunately it has an appalling record of funding disastrous projects and of forcing developing countries to restructure their economies so that they have to use their resources to pay their debt. It is focused on economic growth and not on people and the quality of their lives. Recently there have been signs of change. Last year, in its first report on poverty in 10 years, it recommended strategies to alleviate poverty.

The bank also appears to be developing an environmental consciousness. Both the IMF and the World bank have begun talking about taking into account how well Governments serve their people, rather than just the creditors, and are looking at—and frowning on—excessive military expenditure. These changes should be welcomed and encouraged, but we have heard words about the poor from the bank before, and nothing has changed.

Will there be a genuine shift this time? What will the Government do to monitor future bank lending? How do they propose that the bank should implement its new poverty focus? The Government have adopted a passive and complacent role, supporting both United States and World bank ideology. They have defended the bank's record, but with little debate on the issues involved. In what direction do the Government think that the bank should be going? What position was put forward by the United Kingdom executive director in recent debates on bank policy?

The three priority areas identified for IDA9 are poverty reduction, support for sound economic policies and the environment. Have the Government reviewed past policies and recommended changes for the future? How does United Kingdom aid policy fit in with the new bank priorities? What changes in policy are the Government planning? What factors determine the level of United Kingdom contribution to IDA9 and the decision not to make supplementary contributions? The answer seems to be that, as usual, the Overseas Development Administration is muddling along with no clear policy or decisions, supporting a bit of everything. The Government's attitude to the world development report on poverty provides a clear example. The two-pronged strategy for the poor—labour-intensive growth combined with investment in health and education and a safety net for the poorest—marks a significant and important change in World bank thinking, and should be welcomed.

Like the ODA, the bank has focused on structural adjustment, earning foreign exchange and paying debts to

the exclusion of all else. The newly announced policies should be welcomed as a significant change. Then, every ounce of political pressure must be put into ensuring that the new policies are translated into actions, and reforming United Kingdom bilateral policies to the same end. Unfortunately, the Government have hardly acknowledged the shift by the bank. Far from pledging that the United Kingdom will now focus on poverty alleviation strategies, the Minister conveniently gives the impression that all is in hand, that no change is needed, and that we can sit back and do nothing new.

Can the Minister, in all honesty, be so complacent? We are talking about whether 300 million people can climb out of poverty by the year 2000. We are talking about the lives or deaths of millions of children. We are talking about whether Governments in the north and south will take these extra steps and make these extra efforts for the quarter of the world's population living in poverty. Why does the Minister continue to give anodyne answers about all aid and growth benefiting the poor? She should admit instead that the bank and the ODA were wrong. Growth simply does not trickle down to the poorest. Structural adjustment in the 1980s has not solved the economic crisis. More than 1 billion people live in dire poverty and it is time to focus our best efforts on them.

What is needed in the 1990s is economic adjustment which redirects resources to the poor and invests in people, along with large flows of concessional funds, debt reduction and better trade. The recommendation that a Government's commitment to poverty reduction be one of the main performance criteria deciding the allocation of IDA resources has major implications. Just how much weight will be given to this?

The Labour party would be delighted to see international funds focused on Governments with a genuine commitment to helping their citizens. Are the Government willing to back up that policy? Perhaps the Government will tell us whether United Kingdom aid policy will change in line with the bank's new thinking. I understand that the bank has issued a handbook on implementing the new poverty emphasis. I wonder whether it has been issued to the staff of the Overseas Development Administration.

The bank projects that the number of people living in poverty in Africa could increase by up to 100 million. It notes that with an extraordinary effort by donors and Governments that increase could be avoided. The bank's report on Africa in October 1989 entitled, "From Crisis to Sustainable Growth", laid out a strategic agenda for donors and Governments and called for a doubling of spending on the development of human resources. It called the target of 4 per cent. to 5 per cent. annual growth in Africa "ambitious but achievable" if donors increase aid by 4 per cent. per year in real terms to reach $22 billion at today's prices by the year 2000. Can the Minister explain how, with an aid budget planned to stagnate in real terms, the United Kingdom will play its part?

The report on sub-Saharan Africa was not a one-off shot in the dark. The conference, which was organised by the Dutch Government, began by building a consensus around the report. Who represented the United Kingdom at that conference and what views did they contribute? Are the Government supporting the movement for a new global coalition or are they, as I suspect, dragging their feet?

The special needs of Africa for concessional flows have been recognised by the bank in the form of a special programme of assistance. There is now agreement that Africa needs more aid and more debt relief, but what is being done to secure it? The bank is funding a debt reduction facility to buy up the commercial debt of the poorest countries. Those are the IDA-only countries. The overhang of commercial debt is small but weighty because it inhibits new private investment and trade. Removing it is relatively easy, but vital. Just as damaging is the debt owed to the multilateral institutions. Sub-Saharan Africa owes more than $20 billion to the World bank and last year it handed over $1·5 billion in debt servicing. How can the bank possibly promote labour-intensive growth strategies and investment in the poor when the money that it puts in comes straight out in debt repayment?

Sub-Saharan Africa owes $20 billion to the IDA and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The new policies being promoted in Washington cannot be realised until the contradiction is resolved; yet we have heard little from the Government about reducing multilateral debt. Debt undermines everything else. Bank loans still stress the importance of exports to earn foreign exchange to pay for debt servicing. Export promotion often means huge capital-intensive and energy-intensive projects. That means less money for investing in the poor, and more huge dams and power stations which displace people and destroy the environment.

The Minister implies that the United Kingdom is active in the World bank but prefers to keep quiet about the powerful muscles that are stretched behind the scenes. If the United Kingdom has been willing to stand up to the bank, how is it that millions of dollars have been spent on projects which have left hundreds of thousands of people homeless and decimated so many acres of agricultural land?

Why is it that the Sardar Sarovar dam in India is still going ahead after five years of bitter controversy? Total World bank funding is $450 million, of which $250 million is from the IDA. The project will submerge 13,744 hectares of forest and 11,318 hectares of valuable agricultural land. Ninety thousand people will be displaced—yet, six years into the project, no adequate resettlement plans exist. Crucial environmental studies were not undertaken at the beginning, and World bank policy on involuntary settlement has been broken. Even basic information about the project was kept from those threatened by the dam. Thousands of "oustees" have made peaceful demonstrations, and Indian non-governmental organisations have adopted a policy of peaceful non-co-operation, calling for the project to be scrapped. Several Indian Government officials now agree that the plans should be reviewed. Members of parliaments all around the world have called on the bank to cancel the project.

The World bank responded by sending more missions and by laying conditions on the Indian Government, but in most cases it has acted too late, or has ignored the recommendations of its own staff to suspend the loan. In July 1990, credit was extended for a further year on condition that satisfactory progress was made with its conditions for improved resettlement plans. However, land has still not been found to resettle 90,000 people.

Can the Minister explain why that disastrous loan has not been suspended? Of course developing countries need energy to develop their economies, and it would be wrong

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

to block projects which can benefit the poor because we in the northern hemisphere have abused the environment and are not prepared ourselves to end harmful practices. However, the projects in question do nothing to help the poor, but devastate their lives instead.

There is an alternative to that madness. Mega-disasters such as Sardar Sarovar need never have happened if the World bank had considered energy conservation properly. Research in America by the Environmental Defence Fund shows that if, instead of investing $1·5 billion in Sardar Sarovar, a smaller investment had been made in conservation measures—including high-efficiency motors and fluorescent lighting—that would have produced three times as much electricity. However, it is clear from World bank appraisals of that project that energy and irrigation alternatives were not adequately reviewed.

What are the irrigation alternatives? Of 246 large-scale projects begun in India since 1951, 181 are still incomplete. Some are World bank projects. Instead of sinking funds into new dams, why does the bank not review incomplete projects and finish those which are environmentally and socially sound? At the same time, the bank would do well to switch to small-scale irrigation projects which directly serve and involve local communities. Sardar Sarovar is just one example. Throughout the world, 70 projects funded by the World bank, and many IDA-funded projects, are displacing 1·5 million people; yet the bank cannot document one case in which a displaced population is not worse off than before.

Energy sector lending has become the World bank's biggest sector in recent years, accounting for up to one fifth of all loans. However, only 3 per cent. of energy and industrial sector lending has gone into inducing energy efficiency improvements in the past 10 years. In India, not one dollar of the $8·5 billion spent on the energy sector has gone into improving the efficiency with which energy is consumed. The economic benefits of energy conservation are clear. The World bank's own study suggested that conservation measures saving 20 per cent. of commercial energy used in the developing world would amount to about $30 billion per annum of total government savings, which is equivalent to about two thirds of total aid flows. It is equivalent to 60 per cent. of the net flow of resources from poor to rich due to debt servicing. Recent announcements that the bank will increase its support for energy efficiency and the recommendations on that in the IDA9 agreement are greatly welcomed. However, will the Government carefully monitor whether lending is indeed focused upon renewable energy, energy efficiency and least-cost planning from now on? A radical switch in priorities is an economic and environmental necessity.

The new IDA9 agreement contains unprecedented language on many environmental aspects of its work, and that is very much to be welcomed. It is good to see references, at last, to increased public access to information on IDA projects and programmes, public participation in IDA projects, and improvement and implementation of the bank's operational directive on environmental impact assessments. However, the bank still has a long way to go. It first announced its environmental reforms and the creation of an environmental department in 1987, but examination of projects since then shows that the hoped-for improvement in the bank's policies, especially regarding tribal people and forced resettlement, has not materialised. The goals and guidelines are there, but they have not been incorporated into the bank's operations.

The central environmental department has been marginalised as the 1987-88 reorganisation decentralised decisions to regions, while the four environmental units in the regional offices are hampered by lack of authority and small budgets. The operational directive on environmental assessment encourages, but does not require, public involvement in the process of drawing up environmental impact assessments. It states that the need for environmental impact assessments should be considered, not that it must be done, and it explicitly includes non-project and structural adjustment lending from environmental improvement assessments.

Can the Minister assure the House today that work is under way to ensure that the new environmental language in IDA9 is implemented? Can she report any evidence that the bank is making environmental assessments available to the public, carrying out environmental impact assessments in all necessary cases and involving the people most affected by projects?

The news that the World bank is to triple funding for forestry is worrying, given the bank's previous forestry record and the decision to channel those funds through the tropical forestry action plan. So far, TFAP has promoted commercial forestry and ignored the needs of indigenous people who rely upon the forests, and last year's review process has not solved that problem. For example, one of the first projects to be funded by the bank is a $23 million forestry and fisheries project in Guinea. In fact, it is a deforestation scheme, paying for the construction of 45 miles of road in or around two humid forest reserves totalling 150,000 hectares, two thirds of which are pristine forest, of which two thirds will be opened up for timber production. Just as the Government should refuse to channel funds through the TFAP mechanism until comprehensive reviews are in place, so should the World bank.

The Minister mentioned the effects of the Gulf crisis, and the level of replenishment of IDA9 more than maintains the real value of IDA8. That is also to be welcomed if the reforms are implemented and the money is well spent on genuine development. However, there is no doubt about the enormous need for concessional funds in developing countries, and the Gulf crisis has certainly exacerbated the situation.

The oil price rise is devastating third-world countries. In Mozambique, one of the five countries hit by famine, flights of food supplies have been cancelled because fuel costs are too great. In this context, I was glad to hear the Minister say that the increased costs would not hamper famine relief for Ethiopia, the Sudan, Angola and Liberia.

According to United Nations economists, the world's poorest countries will have to find an extra $32 billion for oil this year. Already crippled by debt repayments, they simply cannot afford to buy the oil to keep their economies going. At the same time, many developing countries have lost a vital source of foreign exchange as their nationals have had to flee home from the Gulf. Before the invasion, one third of Bangladesh's foreign exchange earnings came from workers in the Gulf; now Bangladesh has not only lost vital earnings, but has had to cope with transporting and supporting thousands of refugees.

The crisis has already cost African nations $2 billion last year. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka lost more than $2·5 billion. All four import oil, had strong trade links with Iraq and Kuwait, and depended on remittances from thousands of citizens working in the Gulf.

Under article 50 of the United Nations charter, countries affected by United Nations actions can claim compensation, but the United Nations' has no budget allocation with which to pay them. Egypt, Jordan and Turkey are receiving aid in partial compensation for the enormous toll that sanctions take on their economy, but the poorest nations, which are devastated by the oil price rise, have received nothing. The Government should work with others to set up a United Nations' fund to finance article 50. Without that, those least able to pay will bear the costs of the crisis.

Finally, I must say a few words about the Caribbean development bank. Like other regions, the Caribbean needs aid and capital flows, but debt and the Gulf crisis are taking their toll there as well. The current oil crisis means that Jamaica will have to pay an extra $50 million each year for its oil imports. Uncertainty over the Gulf, combined with recession in the United States and Canada, is already hitting the tourist trade, a major source of foreign exchange. Jamaica is one of the most indebted countries in the world—its $4·5 billion debt represents $1,800 for every man, woman and child on the island while gross national product is just $1,200 per person. A hefty proportion of the debt is owed to the World bank and the International Monetary Fund. Along with bilateral donors, those official agencies are now taking more out of Jamaica than they are putting in through new loans. Not surprisingly, research shows that one third of Jamaicans are unable to feed themselves adequately. The Jamaican Government want to invest in health and education, but under IMF auspices the percentage of public spending devoted to those essentials has declined.

The need for the Caribbean countries to develop and diversify their export base has long been recognised. Continued dependence on goods such as bananas could be crippling after 1992. Not enough thought is yet being given to the impact of the European single market on developing countries. The various mechanisms, such as the Lomé convention and the United States Caribbean basin initiative, have not brought about sustained export growth in new sectors. The Caribbean development bank must support the continued effort for export diversification. For the British dependencies, the Caribbean development bank provides a valuable link with multilateral funds to which they would not otherwise have access.

I welcome both the orders, although I enter a caveat in regard to the Caribbean development bank. That part of the world needs every possible form of help if it is to overcome the major structural problems that exist in the region as a whole.

9.44 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): At the end of her speech the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) said that she welcomed both orders. Until that point I felt that much of her curmudgeonly criticism implied that she did not. I am glad that she does. All those hon. Members who take an interest in the third world, and poverty in particular, have a very soft spot for the International Development Association and its work. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development said in her speech, IDA has played an increasingly important co-ordinating role in terms of both bilateral aid and major World bank aid. The fact that IDA lends on such advantageous concessionary terms—even down to no interest at all—means that it is one of the most effective ways to lend money without causing an increasing debt problem.

In recent years there has been a convergence of thought about the transfer of resources to the developing world. That convergence is to be seen in the World bank and other United Nations agencies, but it is seen in its most welcome form in the South-South report that was compiled by the third world. Many of its recommendations repeat exactly the same conditions as are laid down by IDA and the United Nations Development Programme. That convergence ought to allow us to be more forthright in supporting the ninth replenishment order.

My right hon. Friend suggested that the order deals sensitively with the principal issues and concentrates on those that cause us most concern. Poverty, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Cynon Valley, is one of the most difficult problems to overcome, not because of the World bank's original policy and our own bilateral aid but partly because of the way in which such matters are dealt with by various Governments. For example, the Government of the Sudan do not consider that all the poor people in their country are part of the system. It is difficult, therefore, to offer aid that will provide long-term assistance for the poorest people in the Sudan and similar countries. Their Governments do not recognise the existence of poor people.

When the amount of money needed for replenishment was debated, the problems in the Gulf had not arisen. Those of us who have travelled recently in developing countries know that the prospect of an increase in the price of oil, particularly in those countries that depend on the Soviet Union for their oil supplies at subsidised rates, causes dread. My right hon. Friend ought to keep that point very much in mind. Part of IDA's funds is used for essential imports. For many countries, their most essential import is oil. After the order has been approved, a further statement ought to be made about our intentions if we are to solve the oil problem for these countries in a co-ordinated and helpful way.

I welcome the statement that 45 to 50 per cent. of IDA's funds should continue to be given to Africa. Despite the bad news in the Horn of Africa—Somalia, Ethiopia and the Sudan—many of us believe that welcome changes are being made in Mozambique. It is also possible that the civil war in Angola will come to an end, which is to be welcomed, as is the prospect of the end of apartheid in South Africa. During the next three years there is the potential for pump-priming assistance to be given to those countries in Africa, such as Mozambique and Angola, that have tremendous national resources. All they need is peace and the opportunity to concentrate on their own future. Aid in the form of pump priming would be paid back a hundredfold in terms of the relief of poverty, particularly in Mozambique, the poorest country in the world yet the one with the most tremendous development potential.

Those who think much about Africa recognise that, far from being in the third world, some African countries

[Mr. Jim Lester]

could slip into the fourth world and way below anything that we have seen so far. We want to maintain and ensure the commitment of the ninth replenishment.

I welcome the comments of my right hon. Friend the Minister on the Trinidad terms—we seem to be debating all the "Ts"—and the Toronto terms for debt relief. I hope that the new Chancellor will pursue this with the same enthusiasm as his predecessor. We must act quickly if we are to fulfil the conditions and rules by which we approve both orders.

9.50 pm

Mrs. Chalker: With the leave of the House, I shall respond briefly to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). My hon. Friend showed that we have come a long way since the earliest days of International Development Association concession funding. Perhaps the hon. Lady did not realise quite what a change there has been: one certainly would not have thought so from her remarks tonight.

The hon. Lady asked about the poverty focus of our aid programme. I stressed our efforts, through IDA and World bank loans, to focus on poverty. More than 80 per cent. of our bilateral programme is focused on countries with a gross national product per head of less than $700. We target the poorest developing countries by encouraging and supporting economic reform programmes. We need to help them to stimulate their own growth, which is critical to their long-term success. We try to ensure that their reform programmes take into account the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable so that they are safeguarded. That is part of the general approach of the World bank, and certainly of the IDA programmes.

A further way by which we seek to help under our programmes is direct poverty alleviation, which in India alone amounts to more than £130 million worth of commitments from the British aid programme. There is much going on under the British aid programme, let alone under the enhanced focus of the World bank, which we have been in the forefront of encouraging.

The hon. Lady sought to say that we do not do very much and used that awful word "complacent". My goodness, I shall never be complacent while there are mouths to feed and people who need help in the third world, let alone in our own country. She does not realise that sometimes one must work for a long time to get something as well focused as the ninth replenishment of IDA. The World bank has come a long way in the past two or three years. The hon. Lady need have no fear, because through our executive director in Washington we shall continue to play the fullest possible role in the decisions of the bank. That is why we ensure that we are represented at all the international meetings, including the one in the Netherlands on Africa. That was not a World bank meeting but a mixture of many of us who are thoroughly involved in the development needs of Africa and the third world. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend, but it was attended by my deputy secretary. I received a good report, and I have been in touch with my Dutch opposite number to get as much as one can from the meeting without being there in person.

The hon. Lady said that the World bank was not paying enough attention to people and poverty. I could tell her at length—I will not do so because I know that she is tired after returning from the far east—what has been going on.

I was glad that the hon. Lady welcomed the world development report. We also welcomed it. The board of the World bank will give special consideration to how to deal with poverty through all its projects later this month. That is a result partly of the discussions that we have had about the IDA replenishment and partly of the general emphasis which is now placed on poverty alleviation. The board of the World bank is doing exactly what the hon. Lady criticised it for failing to do. I assure her that we shall press it to continue to take the matter seriously.

The hon. Lady said that the World bank handbook had been issued. I believe that it has not yet been issued, but if it contains anything from which we could learn or which we could utilise, we shall do so. We are not embarrassed about adopting good ideas wherever they come from, provided that they will work and can be helpful.

The hon. Lady went on to talk about debt relief, another subject on which we could have an entire debate. I shall not speak about it at length. Suffice it to say that the IDA has $100 million to help recipients to buy back commercial debt at a discount. The assistance is limited to $10 million for any one country. To qualify, countries must have a satisfactory adjustment programme, and debt management strategies. The assistance is in grant form —a fact which many people do not realise. Niger has had its operation approved and discussions on Bolivia and Mozambique are taking place. It is a modest facility and it can be used only in certain cases, but it will help many countries in the future.

IDA assistance is also available to countries with outstanding International Bank for Reconstruction and Development debts. Repayments of IDA credits are mostly committed in advance of the new lending. It would be imprudent to commit them in full as all the expected repayments may not be forthcoming. So 10 per cent. of the expected reflows each year are not committed in advance but are used to supplement IDA credits to IDA-only countries with IDA supported adjustment programmes which have outstanding World bank debts. Certainly the IDA is helping many countries in that position.

During the months that the hon. Lady and I have faced each other at the Dispatch Box, she has made several criticisms of the environmental aspects of World bank projects. She knows how keen I am to make sure that only environmentally sound projects are undertaken. In the past projects have been initiated which were subject to fair criticisms. But it is only a handful of projects, all of which are old ones which began before the World bank became aware of environmental issues.

The hon. Lady should remember that the bank's presence and the conditionality of the projects help to mitigate the damage. That must continue to be so. The bank is seeking to improve its performance and to make what improvements are possible to old projects. The various regional vice-presidencies, which are responsible for the country programmes, each have environmental units and if we found anything of the nature that the hon. Lady described we should take it up with them.

The hon. Lady mentioned one such project in detail. It would be sensible for me to write to her about it and put the letter in the Library. Often at the beginning of major projects an agreement is made that the recipient country

will safeguard the resettlement and rehabilitation of people who are displaced by a project which they fully support. If the World bank finds that that is not done, it is landed with a problem not of its own making but for which it is blamed even though the recipient Government did not carry through the original agreement.

In many cases that is at least part of the answer to the sorts of problem which the hon. Lady and I come across and which we wish not to see in future projects. In other words, we should seek to ensure that the World bank takes safeguards to ensure that the recipient country cannot fall down on the rehabilitation and resettlement of those whom it undertook to look after. Once that has happened, it is extremely difficult to put right. The bank is making considerable efforts to persuade the Indians to deal with resettlement on the projects which the hon. Lady mentioned. Unfortunately, it is taking a long time, but we shall see what can be done to assist.

I thoroughly agree with the hon. Lady that energy projects should be energy efficient. She will know from previous debates that we are insisting on much more efficient use of energy in all our bilateral programmes. That is also becoming true for the World bank. If she comes across a project, whether a World bank project or, I hope not, even a bilateral project which she believes will not meet environmental or energy-efficient guidelines, I want her to tell me straight away so that I can do something about it. I hope that that will not happen, but if it does, let us at least avert the impending disaster that she perceives by acting on the first possible knowledge.

The hon. Lady also mentioned problems in forestry. She said that the World bank had supported several forestry projects which were less than sensible. It is unrealistic to expect logging simply to stop. I think that she knows that in her heart of hearts when she thinks about what it means. The bank has had problems with certain Governments who saw logging as a way of getting income. The bank has been seeking to persuade those Governments to log only sustainably managed forests. That must be how it should work in future.

Logging cannot be wholly eliminated. Indeed, forestry experts tell me that it should not be, but that it needs to be properly managed. I hope that the World bank will consult non-governmental organisations on projects to make sure that logging is from sustainably managed forests always and that indigenous people are given proper management training on how to maintain the forests.

The hon. Lady went on to say something about the Gulf crisis. I fully agree with her about the serious impact on many poor countries. There is a good chance that many of them, such as Jamaica, will get help from IDA. If there are adequate voluntary additional donor contributions that may be possible.

Many of the other aspects of our short debate on which the hon. Lady touched concern the Caribbean Development bank. Its work is interesting and exceptional. We have a programme in Jamaica where the disbursements are likely to be in excess of £5 million this year. In the past 10 years, capital aid to Jamaica has been provided largely as programme aid in support of its structural adjustment programmes. The £7·5 million loan which we agreed three years ago is being used in part to provide textbooks in secondary schools. We have provided a further £3 million grant to assist with reconstruction after hurricane Gilbert in September 1988. A further grant of £7·5 million was agreed last April, of which £3 million of programme aid was in support of its latest economic recovery measures.

All donors find it takes time to identify sound projects, but when we do we can commit the loans that we have agreed to ensure that there is a full disbursement of the balances and that the grants are likely to continue as planned from the beginning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe referred to Africa as being one of the most needy continents, particularly at this time, and on that there will be no difference between any of us in this House. We must ensure that we spend our money wisely and efficiently in the best interests of those in need. We should discuss with them at all stages what their interests are and ensure that the programmes that we work out with them address the key issues of poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and the building of a more healthy and better society for those people. We hope that IDA, the concessional arm of the World bank, will achieve that to an even greater extent in the future than perhaps it has done in the past. We shall leave no stone unturned to ensure that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft International Development Association (Ninth Replenishment) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 10th December, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft Caribbean Development Bank (Further Payments) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 10th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

CENSUS (CONFIDENTIALITY) BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Census (Confidentiality) Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr. David Evans be discharged from the Select Committee on Members' Interests and Mr. Peter Viggers be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

PROCEDURE

Ordered,

That Mr. William Powell be discharged from the Select Committee on Procedure and Mrs. Marion Roe be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

NHS (Negligence Claims)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10.6 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Perhaps I should explain to my hon. Friend the Minister the reasons for raising this particular subject on the Adjournment. First, for some years now I have been concerned about the way in which health authorities have to fund the payments that they make after successful claims for compensation. Secondly, unfortunately, last year, one of my constituents, Donna Horne, suffered a grievous blow to her health after treatment at Leicester hospital. Her case is sub judice and I must be careful in what I say, but the tragic case of Donna Horne brought home to me the need for more to be done to assist those who are the unfortunate victims of negligence of national health service treatment.

It was only when I was discussing Donna's case with her legal adviser that I became even more aware of the deficiencies in the common law of tort. I discovered that, even though the majority of such cases—more than 90 per cent.—are settled out of court, a settlement can still take up to 10 years or more. The idea that there should be a regular payment or a periodic or structured payment can be agreed only if the judge finds out that the defendant and plaintiff have agreed to such a decision. Unfortunately, what happens now is that, often, there seems to be some unseemly wrangle about the amount of the lump sum to be paid based on the life expectancy of the unfortunate victim. Because of that, many years of negotiation take place even when the case is settled out of court.

Because of my concern about that, I put down a question on 3 December to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to ask him if he would consider producing guidelines which could be used by Her Majesty's judges to make orders for such structured payments. My right hon. and learned Friend replied that that was a matter for the judiciary. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend did not want to mislead me, but his reply was misleading. As the organisation Action for Victims of Medical Accidents has said, periodical payments such as a yearly payment, perhaps uprated by the retail prices index each year, can be awarded by a judge only if both sides to the dispute consent.

In the case of Burke *v.* Tower Hamlets health authority on 10 August 1989, Mr. Justice Drake held:

"in determining quantum of damages for the costs of future care in a case of personal injury, the court has no power to order periodical payments instead of a lump sum except when both parties to the action consent to such an award."

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Action for Victims of Medical Accidents wrote to me saying:

"It is only the Government that can change this by changing the law so that periodical payment orders can be made whether the Defendant consents or not."

In the circumstances, there seems to be a need for the law to be changed.

I understand that there are some in Government quarters who believe that there can be reform of civil procedures in order to accelerate the progress of such cases through the legal system. But those cases are often medically complex and sometimes the prognosis is uncertain. Therefore, delay could well occur even if other steps were taken to speed up the process, particularly as it seems that the arguments about the size of the cash award could be protracted.

It is interesting that a full report drawn up by the Royal College of Physicians on the subject states on page 14:

"The problems associated with one-off, lump-sum payments in negligence cases might be reduced by measures to encourage the use of provisional damages and structured payments. The former would allow cases to be concluded, either by means of a lump sum or a regular payment, on the basis of an assessment of the plaintiff's present condition while reserving his or her right to seek a revision if this condition changed adversely. The latter would provide for the payment of an agreed regular sum (without the prospect of subsequent revision) to the plaintiff for the duration of his or her natural life, thereby eliminating the problem of the 'pools win' type dissipation of a large single payment."

It goes on to say—this is of special interest to health authorities—

"Periodic payments would seem a particularly appropriate form of settlement for public bodies like health authorities to adopt since they can be assumed to have an indefinite life and need not become involved in the problems of arranging capital provision annuities which have arisen with private insurers . . . It is possible that courts could by primary legislation be empowered to impose structured settlements, rather than depending purely on the plaintiff's consent as at present."

Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give my proposal serious and urgent attention. Victims of such terrible cases and their relatives would like to know that the Government are urgently addressing a problem that is increasing as more and more claims are made. I should like my hon. Friend to do what he can to convince the victims and their relatives that the Government are anxious to ensure that no unnecessary additional suffering is caused by prolonged litigation and that, by contrast, litigation should be kept to an absolute minimum.

I know that from 1 January 1990 the national health service has accepted that it will be responsible for claims against doctors and health authorities where it is said that negligence has occurred. My hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but I believe that such sums still have to come from health authorities' budgets. The first £200,000 of a claim must be met by the district health authority—a matter of considerable anxiety to many health authorities. First, the timing of an award being made against them is uncertain, as is the amount, because of the present legal process. Many district health authorities suddenly confronted by a bill for £200,000 for which they have not budgeted would be in great difficulty finding the money without taking drastic action—even perhaps closing wards. If, by any chance, they are faced with two such claims in one financial year, it is almost certain that health services in their areas would have to be cut.

The regions are not in a much better position. Few have adequate sinking or reserve funds to meet such claims. Even when they have such funds, as does my region—Oxford RHA—they will soon be depleted because of the claims on them.

I have discussed the matter with the chairmen of two RHAs and both agreed that some better method of funding is badly needed. One reason why is that there is a sharp growth in the frequency and severity of medical liability claims, and the problem for many health authorities is how to meet the cost of those claims. The Government have accepted that they have overall responsibility for negligence claims, but they must also

make clear provision for fulfilling that responsibility, and in such a way as not to impose a handicap on the day-to-day funding of the NHS.

I do not suggest for a moment that health authorities that are negligent should be allowed to be less vigilant. Any cases of negligence must be fully investigated and the necessary steps taken to prevent their recurrence. But, just as the Government have decided that doctors should not be expected to be financially responsible for claims against them, they should also ensure that health authority patients do not suffer because of these payments.

The timing of this debate is apposite in view of the introduction of a private Member's Bill by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes), who I am delighted to see in her place. She intends to introduce a Bill for no-fault compensation. The Government have considerable reservations about it, but I sympathise with the hon. Lady's Bill as well as understanding those reservations. If the Government do not like her Bill, they are obliged not only to show why they cannot accept it but to put forward a coherent and realistic policy to deal with cases of compensation such as the one that I have discussed tonight. When such a tragedy takes place, people want every sympathy and the knowledge that their difficult situation can be remedied as soon as possible. The health authority should feel that it can make reasonable and fair payments without having to consider their effect on the day-to-day running of their services.

The two measures that I have suggested can apply whether or not the hon. Lady's Bill comes into force. She will argue that patients will still have the right to go to law if they are not satisfied with the compensation awarded to them. If the Minister accepts that, I wonder whether he will accept my final point: that these two measures will apply whether the hon. Lady's Bill is accepted or not, but that if the Government do not accept it, these measures will become even more essential as a sign that the Government are concerned about this matter and are aware that it is a cause of growing anxiety throughout the country. They must have a realistic policy to deal with this difficulty.

10.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) on securing the first Adjournment debate of the new year and on raising an issue of such obvious current concern to the House, not least as a result of the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes). My hon. Friend deployed his argument in measured tones, and it was a seductive one due to the position in which the Government find themselves. I shall respond first to his closing comments.

It is clearly true that the two specific arguments that my hon. Friend advances are independent of any consideration of no-fault liability and must therefore be considered regardless of the Government's attitude to the proposals advanced by the hon. Member for Greenwich.

I entirely understand the position in which my hon. Friend found himself when he represented a constituency interest as a result of a case of medical negligence. There are difficult issues to be addressed when dealing with individual cases of such a nature, and I shall respond in some detail to both of my hon. Friend's specific proposals. I shall deal first with the argument that the health authorities are primarily responsible for compensation for proved medical negligence.

When health authority resources are scarce—and was there ever a time when they were not—health authority managers argue that responsibility for funding such an award should fall elsewhere in the national health service. I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that, however that is presented in bureaucratic terms, the reality is that any cash paid to meet a medical negligence claim or a no-fault claim by a patient must come from the limited resources available to the NHS. It is purely a bureaucratic decision whether such sums come from the budget of a specific health authority or from some back pocket in the Department. The only way to fund such a back pocket is to top slice the total NHS budget, thereby reducing the amount committed at the beginning of the year to health authorities.

My hon. Friend will accept that there is a degree of kidology about his proposal because whatever part of the NHS the claims were met from they would still be deducted from the NHS budget, and that would reduce the amount of resources available for patient treatment either in the health authority responsible for the payment or elsewhere.

Secondly, one of the reasons for keeping the principle of allowing a claim for negligence is to ensure that the clinician and the health authority as the clinician's employer are held to account if a case of negligence can be proved. I think that that is accepted by the hon. Member for Greenwich. That is a major reason for keeping the principle of negligence, even if we accept the principle of no-fault liability. We must retain the principle that damages should be payable if negligence can be proved, but that argument is powerful only if the responsibility for meeting a negligence claim rests reasonably directly either on the clinician or on the employing authority. If a concentration of negligence claims came to a health authority, it could cause financial difficulty. No one but a blind man could fail to recognise that.

Nevertheless, it is important that the primary responsibility for funding the payment of negligence claims should rest with the body which can properly be held accountable for the fact that negligence took place. After all, in the case of claims for proven negligence, we are talking about the individual's right to redress when he suffers as a result of somebody not properly discharging his professional responsibility. All those interested in the subject agree that, in those circumstances, proper redress should be available to the individual citizen, and the person responsible for the negligence should be held to account through the agency of the health authority. I understand the force of what my hon. Friend said, but I should not want to see liability for payment of negligence claims divorced from the circumstances which gave rise to the negligence.

My hon. Friend spoke at some length about what he, his constituent and her legal advisers understandably see as the inadequacies of the law of tort in dealing with claims of medical negligence. It is common ground that the law in this sector is inadequate in some respects. That is why Lord Hailsham, when he was Lord Chancellor, established a civil justice review to improve the machinery of civil justice in England and Wales by means of reforms in jurisdiction, procedure and court administration, and in particular to reduce delay, cost and complexity. That

[Mr. Stephen Dorrell]

review reported in June 1988 and many of its proposals found their way into legislation through the Courts and Legal Services Act 1989. The Government are committed to doing everything in their power to make the operation of the civil justice system, and in this context the law on medical negligence, effective.

I do not accept the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Greenwich that because the law is inadequate in some respects that is sufficient reason to overturn the principle underlying the law. The principle is right, although I accept my hon. Friend's point that in practice the operation of the law is not as good as it should be and therefore should be improved. The Government are firmly committed to doing that.

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): Is the Minister convinced that the law of tort, with its confrontational approach, is appropriate in the situations which can arise in the NHS? For example, a patient may have a confident, long-standing relationship with his doctor but something goes seriously wrong, although that is nobody's fault. In an organisation as large as the NHS, there can be accidents. The only form of redress is through the confrontational legal process, which has major disadvantages for all concerned. Is there not a more civilised way to deal with the problem?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Lady will have an opportunity to deploy her argument in due time. I believe that it is common ground between us that, when a clinician is negligent, the right of a citizen to redress for that negligence should not be withdrawn. That should not be done differently from the way in which the law of tort is generally pursued in the courts. I do not think that the hon. Lady has any proposals which would change the way in which a claim for medical negligence, where that can be proved against a clinician and employing health authority, will be proceeded with.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough talked about structured payments and phased payments in the event of a medical negligence claim. Those matters were the subject of a review by the Pearson commission in 1978. It was recommended by a majority that provision should be made for damages in the form of periodic payments for future pecuniary loss caused by death or serious and lasting injury.

The Government consulted on the recommendation and found that the idea met with almost universal hostility. That was mainly on the ground that plaintiffs and defendants like a lump sum. Against the background of the consultation—there was virtually no support for the principle of setting up new machinery for dealing with phased payments—the Government decided not to proceed with the Pearson commission's recommendation. As my hon. Friend knows, however, the law allows for the possibility of phased payments. In 1987, that possibility was made somewhat easier to implement when the Inland Revenue reached agreement with the Association of British Insurers that income payments in damages awards would be tax free. Despite the fact that the tax position has improved when a phased payment is made as a result of a medical negligence claim, few such payments are made.

I heard what my hon. Friend said about phased payments and I shall take the matter away and reconsider it, but it is something that has been considered by the Government in the past. The Pearson commission recommended the same line as that which my hon. Friend has suggested, but when the Government consulted they did not find much support for it. That is not to say that we should dismiss the proposal, however, and I have said that I will reconsider it.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the way in which he approached the debate. My approach is to recognise the shortcomings of the existing system and then to urge that we try to make it work better. I take that view because we must accept that medical care is never risk free. It is an artificial process involving artificial interference with a patient. There will always be a residual risk, even when the doctor is entirely diligent, that medical care will not be successful and may even lead to damage to the patient.

The question that the House will ultimately have to address when the hon. Member for Greenwich introduces her Bill is who should take on the risk of cases in which the doctor is diligent. There is no dispute that when the doctor is negligent it is for the health authority and the health service to make recompense for the negligence. Should the state take on the risk if the doctor is diligent, even though any patient who goes for medical treatment must accept that there is always a risk attached to that treatment? If the doctor is diligent, it seems to me reasonable to ask the individual to take the risk on himself, especially when we bear in mind that if the state were to take upon itself the underwriting of the risk the effect would be not to eliminate all difficulty or unhappiness arising from disability but merely to move the boundary. We provide for damages in cases in which the NHS is negligent, but not where it is diligent. The effect of the proposal of the hon. Member for Greenwich would be to move——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have been patient. The Minister is going beyond the subject of the debate and anticipating an issue which will be coming before the House.

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was seeking to express my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough for recognising that the arguments do not in themselves undermine the basis on which the law currently operates.

Our objective should be to ensure that the present law, which holds clinicians to account when they are negligent but does not seek to impose on the health service an obligation to underwrite risk when they are diligent, operates more fairly and effectively in future. That principle is one that the Government wholeheartedly embrace, and I shall seek to demonstrate to my hon. Friend and to the rest of the House that we are able to take practical steps to make that principle real in the months ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 15 January 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr. Speaker: I regret to have to inform the House of the death of Donald Richard Coleman, esquire, CBE, Member for Neath, and I desire, on behalf of the House, to express our sense of the loss we have sustained and our sympathy with the relatives of the hon. Member.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Administrator-Teacher Ratios

1. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to reduce the administrator-teacher ratios within local education authorities.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Michael Fallon): There are unacceptably wide variations in the proportion of resources LEAs delegate to schools. We published proposals last month to require that by April 1993 at least 85 per cent. of resources should get down to the school level. That is where the right decisions will be made.

Mr. Butler: Will my hon. Friend confirm that local management of schools has, at long last, identified the heavy administrative load from which some education services suffer? Is not it time that it was reduced?

Mr. Fallon: My hon. Friend is right. It is wholly wrong that councils such as Coventry and Cleveland should employ as many non-teachers as teachers on their education budgets. Parents and teachers want more of their schools' money given back to the schools themselves, and that is what the new requirement will ensure.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: With Cumbria making every effort to ensure that as much money as possible is devolved to schools, may we presume in return that the Government will look favourably on that authority when they make the next settlement?

Mr. Fallon: I am delighted to hear from the hon. Gentleman, and Cumbria has confirmed it to me, that that authority hopes to do much better next year—it needs to do much better—in delegating more money downwards to its schools.

Secondary Schools (Expenditure)

2. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much at today's prices was being spent per pupil in secondary schools in 1979; and how much is planned to be spent this and the next financial year.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Average school-based spending per secondary pupil in 1978-79 was £1,165 at 1988-89 prices. In 1988-89, the latest year for which actual spending information is available, it was £1,690. That represents a real-terms increase of some 45 per cent.

Detailed information for 1990-91 and 1991-92 is not available on a comparable basis. In 1990-91, the secondary block of the standard spending assessment allows for total expenditure of some £2,175 cash per 11 to 16-year-old secondary pupil. The figure proposed for 1991-92 allows some £2,550 cash per 11 to 16-year-old secondary pupil. That represents a further real-terms increase of 10 per cent. in one year.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that comprehensive reply which, I am sure he will agree, nails the lie that the Government and the Conservative party are not willing to devote more and more resources to education. Has he had a chance to receive feedback about what has happened under the LMS changes to the effectiveness with which the money is spent? Does he agree that it would be better to give 100 per cent. of the money to schools to allow them to decide what they buy from the central education department at county hall?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comprehensive question, which required me to give the figures. I agree that they show that improving standards in our education do not depend wholly on increasing real-terms expenditure, because that is what we have been doing consistently in our period of office. Local management of schools allows money to be spent most effectively at local level in the school. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has issued a circular suggesting that as much money as possible should be made available in that way. A school that feels confident that it can handle its resources best itself should contemplate opting for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Ashton: Arising out of that carefully planted question, are not there now fewer children of that age at school than there were in 1979 and does not it cost as much to maintain and run a school with fewer pupils? Is not it also a fact that much more expenditure now comes from the county council and through the poll tax, not from the Government?

Mr. Clarke: If the question was planted, I know not by whom—certainly not by me. It is a question frequently asked about actual expenditure on education and it brings out the most relevant figures of all, which are those of real-terms spending per pupil. It has risen spectacularly during the period of this Government. Next year's local authority allocations, to which I have just referred, show a 16 per cent. increase in the standard spending assessment —10 per cent. ahead of the rate of inflation. The resources are there and we must ensure that they are used to the best effect to obtain the higher standards that we want.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that local management of schools is a step in the right direction? Those of my schools which have opted out find that they can spend the money a great deal better than Lancashire county council ever did. They are appointing more staff and they can devote more to books and equipment. Roll on the rest opting out.

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to hear of that experience. As news spreads of how successful grant-maintained schools have been, we shall see many more applications. They are now beginning to come in. I agree with my hon. Friend that the money that we are putting into education is best spent by governors who feel confident that they are able to do so in a grant-maintained school under their control.

Mr. Andrew Smith: May I invite the Secretary of State to confess that the statistics of which he boasts do not bear out his claims for the education service, first, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) pointed out, because the numbers of school-age children have fallen from more than 10 million to 8·6 million and, secondly, because the Government have cut expenditure on the nation's schools in real terms by more than a quarter? In addition, have not the Government also cut the share of gross domestic product and the share of public expenditure devoted to education, and does not that show that it is time for a Labour Government with a real commitment to investment in the nation's education in place of the neglect and statistical gimmickry that are characteristic of this Administration?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's assertion of a 25 per cent. real-terms cut is startling. There seems to be some ingenious arithmetic or use of statistics behind that which he had better explain to me on paper if he wants to carry on using that figure. The proportion of GDP is an irrelevant measure of public spending for any service. As it happens, Britain spends a higher percentage of GDP on education than most of our competitors, but that tends to be a measure of the level of GDP. I have shown that there has been an enormous increase in real-terms spending on pupils and I do not believe that the Labour party would have exceeded it. Everyone knows that improving standards of education, standards of reading and spelling have to do with many more things than just the level of public expenditure per pupil.

3. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent per pupil at secondary schools in Staffordshire in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure in 1978-79, at constant prices.

Mr. Fallon: Staffordshire spent £530 per secondary pupil in 1978-79 and £1,610 per secondary pupil in 1988-89. At 1988-89 prices those figures are £1,165 and £1,610 respectively—a real-terms increase of about 38 per cent.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures show an impressive increase in expenditure per pupil in secondary schools in Staffordshire, which nails the lie that there have been cuts since the Government took office?

Mr. Fallon: Yes. Increased spending on education under the Government is not a big idea but a big fact.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: How much of the extra expenditure in Staffordshire is due to the imposition of the national curriculum, for which many schools have to buy different books? In particular, how much extra will his announcement yesterday on the changes in the geography curriculum cost? Would not it have been better to follow the proposals made by The Geographical Association and have geography taught in a way which is much more relevant to modern living?

Mr. Fallon: A substantial proportion of the extra resources are being spent on the national curriculum—and every penny spent on the new national curriculum is a penny well spent. As to additional resources, the national curriculum is being introduced in stages and money will be provided as appropriate.

Schools (Capital Expenditure)

4. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make an announcement on capital expenditure for schools; and if he will make a statement.

6. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about his criteria for funding capital improvements and tackling disrepair and dilapidation in schools.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Tim Eggar): My right hon. and learned Friend announced his decision on the 1991-92 annual capital guidelines for local education authorities, and grant to voluntary-aided schools, on 17 December. In that announcement we gave priority to agreed committed expenditure, the provision of new school places and cost-effective projects to remove surplus places.

The remaining resources are distributed to contribute towards capital improvement work at schools and £109 million will be available for such work this year—an increase of more than 50 per cent. on the sum available in the current year.

Mr. Hoyle: Is the Minister aware that the Secretary of State's statement showed a drop of 9·6 per cent. over the previous year in Cheshire schools' capital expenditure? Surely he is not surprised that parents in Cheshire are extremely concerned at that vast reduction. How can he justify that cut?

Mr. Eggar: Cheshire had a very good settlement. Its annual capital guidelines include almost £1 million for improvements to schools and for other work. In addition, there was an allocation of almost £2 million for capital expenditure by governors of voluntary schools.

Mr. Cohen: Why has the Government's education capital allocation been so inadequate that it has failed to stop the rundown of schools, and why do some—such as Newport junior school in my constituency—receive such exceptionally low priority? Under the Department's guidelines, even the slightest modernisation—such as dealing with leaking roofs and dangerous windows and floors—is classed as an improvement and is therefore deemed to fall outside the Department's basic needs allocation. Is not the truth that the Government do not give a fig for our school children and that they are forcing a slow death on many of our most-loved schools?

Mr. Eggar: I suggest that if the hon. Gentleman is worried about Newport junior school, he knocks on the door of Waltham Forest local education authority, which did not include that school in its bid to my Department. It is up to that LEA to provide the funds—and to ask for them if they are wanted.

Mr. Thornton: My hon. Friend will be aware of successive reports by Her Majesty's inspectorate showing a direct correlation between the quality of the environment in our schools and the standard of education in them. Although I welcome the extra £109 million that is being made available, against the background of an estimated £3 billion of outstanding repairs, will my hon. Friend and his colleagues talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to see whether anything can be done to increase the release of capital receipts to local authorities—which could perhaps be ring-fenced—to bring about important improvements in the state of our schools?

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Friend recognises, in addition to the annual capital guidelines, it is possible for LEAs to raise capital and to spend it on their schools—and a considerable number do so. About £2·6 billion has been spent by LEAs since the annual survey to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend recognise the deep disappointment felt in Cornwall at its capital allocation for the coming year? It is felt not only by members of local education authorities but among many parents. Will he review the criteria for drawing up allocations, because it seems to us that it does not take sufficient account of the need, for example, to replace old Victorian village schools, of which there are many in Cornwall?

Mr. Eggar: I am aware, from representations that my hon. Friend and others have made, of the special problems in Cornwall and of the difficulties of local education authorities. Of course, the criteria have been agreed with the local authority association. If at any time it wishes to reconsider those criteria, or to discuss them with us, we shall be happy to meet it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Despite what the Minister said, many people will find it hard to understand how those criteria work. Despite the overall increase, many local authorities have seen dramatic cuts. Devon has had a big cut and in Cornwall, where £100 million of spending is needed to get up to the Government's standards, the allocation was cut to a little more than £6 million this year. Will the Minister review the figures? Will he review the allocation given to Cornwall? Does he expect that, having already delayed it once, he will have further to delay implementation of the Government's minimum standards for school buildings and the environment in which children are taught?

Mr. Eggar: Of course, we are prepared to listen to suggestions for changing the criteria, but those criteria have to be appropriate for all local authority associations throughout the country for them to be recognised generally as being fair. From time to time, some authorities benefit from the way in which those criteria are drawn up and some do not benefit. That is inevitable when one has objective criteria. As we have already announced, we shall be reviewing the premises regulations shortly.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend must know that many local education authorities, in common with other departments, think in multiples of what they know they can expect from the Department. They include a range of minor capital works which there is no way that any Minister would specify or ring-fence. Is there no method of bidding for capital spending which will stop local authorities from blaming the Minister for every shortcoming in their areas?

Mr. Eggar: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is right. Some local education authorities play political games with their applications. It is for the LEA to decide how to spend those capital guidelines and other borrowing amounts that it has at its disposal in the way that it thinks appropriate. It is answerable to the governors and parents if it refuses to go ahead with capital works improvements and others that it has suggested.

Mr. Fatchett: The Minister seems remarkably complacent in his answers about the £3·5 billion of outstanding repairs in our schools and the fact that tens of thousands of children are taught in dilapidated buildings. Does he reject the proposition by the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton) that there must be a link between low-quality buildings and an inability to provide high-quality education? In an earlier response the Minister seemed to accept that it was all right for school buildings to be of a low standard because it had no adverse effect on education. Thousands of parents up and down the country do not subscribe to that view.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman has not looked at the figures. This year there is 15 per cent. more capital guideline expenditure than last year and there is a 21 per cent. increase in the spending available for voluntary-aided schools on the figure for last year, when there was a considerable increase on the year before. Massive amounts of additional resources are being made available by the Government for spending on capital equipment and on improvements as well as new build.

Grant-maintained Schools

5. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have now decided to seek grant-maintained status.

9. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have applied for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Eighty six schools have submitted applications to the Secretary of State and I am awaiting a further 12 applications following ballots in favour. Of the 86 applications, 56 have been approved, 12 rejected and 18 have yet to be decided.

Mr. Mitchell: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the popularity of the Government's policy for promoting grant-maintained status is growing significantly with parents, governors, teachers and schools, as demonstrated by the fact that there are five times the number of ballots pending compared with a year ago? How long does he think that it will be before the Opposition decide to disavow their shameful and ill-intended opposition to this excellent policy, as they did with the right to buy?

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend's premise. The first grant-maintained schools are experiencing a big improvement in morale, closer parental involvement, more applications for places and a general all-round improvement. I cannot understand why the Labour party remains wedded to the concept of bureaucracy controlling our schools. Like my hon. Friend, I believe that it will rapidly come round to accepting that this is a much more sensible way to run a great public service.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Chalvedon school in Basildon has become the first grant-maintained school in Essex? Does he agree that grant-maintained status has nothing whatever to do with opting out of the state system, but rather signals a change in the method of funding and an increase in educational opportunities?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree. Many other applications are being considered in Essex and those promoting them wish to make their schools better state schools. I believe that that experience will lead many others to apply very shortly.

Mr. Leighton: Does the Department of Education and Science still believe in the elimination of surplus places? If so, why, when the London borough of Newham wanted to close a secondary school that was surplus to requirements and open on the site a primary school that was needed, did the Secretary of State's predecessor—for what I can only assume were ideological reasons—give it grant-maintained status to frustrate that sensible management decision? How can the right hon. and learned Gentleman possibly justify such action and will he, as a new Minister, review it?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly we believe that surplus school places should be removed. The Audit Commission demonstrated that a great deal of money would be released for capital investment if we shed the large number of such places that exist. It is not true that applications for grant-maintained status are an automatic way out; as I said, 12 were rejected when the proposals in those instances were plainly not acceptable. The case of the Stratford school was decided on its merits: parents were committed to making the school grant maintained. I deplore the reaction of Newham and connected authorities which have gone to extraordinary lengths to try to close the school because it had the temerity to try to opt out of local authority control.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State must know that the policy of opting out is a moral and educational failure. Last Saturday, *The Times* described it as evil; it is proof of the Government's subscription not to standards but to double standards. Can the Secretary of State explain why, if no bribes are being offered to schools that try to opt out, the capital allocations for schools that do so, at £355 per pupil, are five times the level of those for local authority schools in the surrounding areas? If no bribes are being offered, is the Secretary of State willing to allow the financial arrangements of opted-out schools to be examined by an independent inquiry?

Mr. Clarke: I repeat my assertion that public services are best delivered by those—in this case, the teachers and governors—who are in closest contact with parents. When such people are capable of being given that responsibility, they should be given it. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman is so much in the pocket of local authorities that wish to maintain their empires that he describes the opting-out policy as "evil".

Mr. Straw: That was in *The Times*.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman quoted that extraordinary proposition with approval. Let me ask him to visit any of the successful grant-maintained schools to which my hon. Friends have referred and try to explain to governors, teachers and parents that he considers their independence an evil in the state system.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: Is not it a fact that, by opening the way for choice and the other benefits provided by grant-maintained status and local management of schools, we are making parents, governors and head teachers more aware of the resources available for education? As parents see that some town halls are hanging on to the money at the centre, will not they increasingly want their schools to opt for grant-maintained status? What further steps can we take to protect those parents, guarantee that they are given that choice and ensure that they are not politically engineered into being frightened away from going for what is good for them?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. We are taking steps to ensure that a fair proportion of the local authority central expenditure that would otherwise be needed for a school is transferred to the school itself. The governors of grant-maintained schools invariably find that they can make better use of the money and, as my hon. Friend so wisely said, they become more aware of what is involved in choices about how to spend money in schools.

We must explain the case properly and ensure that all those who should be interested in the policy are properly canvassed about it, to counter what my hon. Friend describes as the politically motivated distortions being created by some local authorities which simply want to retain their own staffing levels and control over public funds.

Small Primary Schools

7. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about opting-out of small primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There has been a general welcome by parents and governors alike in response to the decision to extend the eligibility to apply for grant-maintained status to primary schools with fewer than 300 pupils.

Mr. Thompson: Is the Minister aware that his Department's policy of encouraging the elimination of surplus places in primary schools is in direct conflict with the opting-out policy? Is it not clear to him that in counties such as Northumberland, with a huge rural population and a considerable number of small primary schools, any school opting out will cause serious problems for an authority which is currently Labour controlled and has the support of the Conservative councillors in preventing opting out? It will kill the education service in rural areas if schools opt out. Will the Minister reconsider the policy in relation to small primary schools?

Mr. Eggar: I have some difficulty following the hon. Gentleman's logic. If those schools are supported in their application for opting out by parents, governors and staff and they are viable schools, why should not they, rather than the administrators at county hall, be responsible for spending the money? They must be best placed to know how to spend the money to the benefit of their pupils in a way that is appropriate in their school.

Mr. Dunn: Does my hon. Friend share my great concern that those who criticise the grant-maintained schools provisions do so because they are motivated by a dislike of the involvement of the consumer? After all, it is the consumer who starts the process leading to the award of grant-maintained status and that is why the Labour party dislikes it so much.

Mr. Eggar: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. It is for that reason that there is a continuing and welcome upsurge in the number of schools applying for grant-maintained status.

Assessment and Testing

8. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what further proposals he has for amendments to the implementation of assessment and testing in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My speech at the north of England conference on 4 January sets out my proposals and I have placed copies in the Library.

Mr. Griffiths: How much money did the Secretary of State waste on the pilot studies that everybody told him beforehand would not work? Does he intend to carry out any pilot studies on the new proposals for seven-year-olds and, if so, will he make further changes if they, too, prove impractical?

Mr. Clarke: The £6 million spent on the pilot studies was money well spent. My predecessor would have been bitterly criticised if he had not piloted those tests. It is in the light of the experience of those pilots that the tests have been greatly simplified and the proposals now being discussed with the profession will be simple and useful to them and extremely informative to parents when they are introduced in July this year.

Mr. Allason: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the national curriculum has proved quite successful, even if it was brought in rather too quickly? Does he agree that a greater proportion of resources would be available for schools, pupils and teachers if less money were spent by local education authorities on administration?

Mr. Clarke: It is now almost universally accepted that the national curriculum is a good idea and it is being supported throughout schools. With respect, I do not agree with my hon. Friend's implied criticism of my two predecessors who are said to have introduced it too quickly. That is now an excuse for former opponents who are coming on side. If my two predecessors had not pressed on with the reforms, the reforms would not have been started by now. Their success is suddenly being perceived. I agree with my hon. Friend's final comment that we need less money spent on administration and more spent where it counts—in the classrooms.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Secretary of State reconsider his proposals for the geography curriculum? As the right hon. and learned Gentleman is in favour of democracy, does he agree that one of the key problems in a democracy is deciding priorities? Would not it be a good idea to teach pupils at an early stage that one of the most difficult areas in which to make decisions is land use? Would not it have been sensible to keep that in the geography curriculum rather than return to a purely factual-based curriculum?

Mr. Clarke: Pupils need to acquire that essential body of factual knowledge and the skills necessary for a true appreciation of it before starting to strike attitudes and form opinions about subjects. We must achieve the right balance in the curriculum as it is being introduced in our schools.

Scientific Research

10. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the new arrangements for the funding of scientific research in higher education institutions to become operative.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his recent appointment to membership of the Agricultural and Food Research Council. To answer his question, the new arrangements for funding research projects supported by research councils in higher education institutions will take effect from 1 August 1992.

Mr. Knapman: I thank my hon. Friend for that excellent reply, but will he assure the House that adequate arrangements have been made during the transitional period and that there will be no reduction in funds for scientific research?

Mr. Howarth: The reason why my right hon. and learned Friend deferred the introduction of the new arrangements until 1992 was so as not to disturb the existing cycle of grant applications and to ensure that the detailed preparations for the new system could be thoroughly carried out. He has invited the research councils to work with representatives of the higher education institutions and the Department to draw up a detailed specification of the new boundary and to put in place new grant application arrangements. I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks on resources. The new arrangements will represent a cost-neutral transfer of funding responsibility from the Universities Funding Council to the research councils.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that a market solution is quite inappropriate for this part of higher education and that there is a crisis in the funding of fundamental research in our higher education institutions, particularly in Scottish universities? How much of those funds is likely to be devoted to fundamental research in Scottish universities? The position must be rectified as soon as possible.

Mr. Howarth: It is healthy and proper that there should be selectivity, concentration on excellence and bidding for the available research funds. The money that the Government have made available for science has increased markedly. The money available through the science

budget and the Universities Funding Council has increased by 10 per cent. The distribution of those funds, to Scottish institutions and elsewhere, is a matter for the research councils and the UFC.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that the proposed arrangements are another way of increasing the attrition of research funding in higher education and basic science generally? What are the Government's long-term objectives? Are they to remove all autonomy from institutions of higher education in relation to research strategy and to concentrate it solely in the hands of research councils and donors?

Mr. Howarth: There has been no attrition of funding. On the contrary, as I said in answer to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), we have increased the amount of funding available through the science budget and the Universities Funding Council by 10 per cent. It certainly is not our intention that all the money made available from the taxpayer in support of scientific research should be channelled through the research councils. We are seeing a shift of a certain proportion of funding from the Universities Funding Council to the research councils so as to clarify where responsibilities lie. We certainly do not intend to end the dual-support system. It is important that funding should be available to universities through the Universities Funding Council so that they can support projects initiated in universities and, in particular, so that they can support the work of promising young scientists who are developing their scientific abilities and experience but who may not yet be at the point where they are able to make a claim on research council funding. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the House to give a fair hearing to these important education answers.

Reading Standards

11. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to monitor reading standards nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The national curriculum will secure, for the first time, national monitoring of standards in reading from age seven onwards. This summer's tests for seven-year-olds will supply the first data in what will soon become a much fuller picture. I have instructed Her Majesty's inspectorate to continue to monitor reading standards and provide me with regular reports.

Mr. Evans: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, after nearly 12 years of Tory government, cuts in the education service, our children's reading standards are, not surprisingly, declining? Will he acknowledge that one reason for that decline is the inability of local authorities to maintain their schools library service, due to lack of funds—a situation which is worsening as a result of the poll tax?

Mr. Clarke: Recent reports show that we do not have enough information on the subject, but they also show that the inadequate reading standards being achieved have little or nothing to do with resources or any of the other excuses put forward. What is required is the systematic application of good teaching methods in schools and for local education authorities to pay much closer attention to the problem. That is why I have written to the chairmen of the local education authorities and I have asked Her Majesty's inspectorate to circulate its report to all head teachers. I am sure that we shall address the issue of good teaching methods, properly applied in schools, to get reading standards up to the level that this country requires.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that much of the responsibility for poor reading standards must lie with the permissive educational regimes which have been pursued in many of the nation's classrooms? Does he agree that what is required is not necessarily greater funding but greater rigour, greater discipline and greater structuring of reading and the way in which it is taught?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend's approach. What is required is good, systematic teaching, principally using phonics, as well as other methods, to teach pupils. The reports show that overdependence on some of the stranger new methods of teaching reading which have been introduced is damaging to pupils' performance. That is the key issue which we must address, along with others.

Mr. Straw: Why does the Secretary of State not have the guts to admit that HMI's report on reading is a stark indictment of the Government's shameful record on that issue? It shows that one in five young children cannot read properly. The back of the report, which the Secretary of State evidently has not read, states that there is a lack of non-contact time, a lack of spending on books and a lack of under-five provision, among other factors named by head teachers. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why his predecessor was so complacent about the reading standards of this nation's children that he abandoned all national monitoring of reading standards in 1989?

Mr. Clarke: Why does the hon. Gentleman not have the guts to admit that the Labour party has been closely associated with every change in teaching methods and with moves towards an overdependence on curious child-centred methods which have been responsible for the problem of reading standards in our schools? No one abolished anything in 1989. The hon. Gentleman makes a totally artificial point about the change in the location of a unit which was moved into the School Examinations and Assessment Council, where it is still operating and monitoring reading standards.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: In monitoring reading standards, will my right hon. and learned Friend give more weight and encouragement to traditional methods of teaching reading, writing and spelling? Will he take a closer look at what is going on in our teacher training colleges?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Most parents look for those schools where the teaching methods are reasonably formal and reasonably well oriented and aimed, above all, at achieving success in reading and spelling. Our introduction of national curriculum testing, our extension of parental choice and our insistence that local authorities should pay more attention to all those factors will get our schools back on to a sensible track of getting reading standards up to the quality that we require.

Nursery Education

12. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has to increase the number of places available in nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It is for local authorities to decide, in the light of annual grant settlements and local circumstances, what provision they might make for nursery education and other services for the under-fives.

Mr. Brown: In 1972, the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) pledged the Conservative party to the creation of an extra 300,000 places for three to four-year-olds. As we are still 200,000 places short, why is it taking the Conservative party so long to implement that pledge? Or has its time expired?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is obviously unaware that more than 150,000 more under-fives attend a maintained school now than was the case in 1979 and that there has been an increase in real spending on nursery school provision of about 50 per cent. in the past 10 years.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my hon. Friend believe that playgroups also offer a valuable pre-school experience? Will not the extra money that has been granted to the Pre-School Playgroups Association achieve valuable results?

Mr. Eggar: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The doubling of the grant that we are able to make available to the Pre-School Playgroups Association is very welcome to the association and will especially help to improve the quality of care that it is able to provide through voluntary organisations.

Ms. Armstrong: Perhaps the Minister has forgotten the report that the Secretary of State published just before Christmas of his own committee, which was chaired by another member of the Government. It said that there needed to be an expansion of provision for under-fives and an improvement in quality. When will the Government accept their responsibility, or will they leave it to the next Labour Government to ensure that children under five have that opportunity?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Lady rightly says, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science published the report just before Christmas. It was a valuable report which concentrated on improving the quality of care and education for the under-fives. I know that there will be a considerable response to the report from local education authorities and from others. The Government have already made a number of responses, including, as I have already said, increasing the grant available to the Pre-School Playgroups Association.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Arnold: In the course of his busy day, will my right hon. Friend spare a thought for the Kuwaiti people who are now in the sixth month of brutal occupation? Does he agree that if British forces have to go into action, they will be fighting in support of the United Nations for the principle that small nations may live in freedom and in peace?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I shall of course, seek to deal with those matters in the course of my speech later this afternoon. If we are to have a safe world—and, clearly, that is our objective—we need to safeguard the positions of small countries with large and potentially aggressive neighbours.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the brutality—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinnock: In view of the brutality against unarmed people in Lithuania and in Latvia in recent days, will the right hon. Gentleman today make direct contact with the Soviet Government to make it clear, beyond all doubt, that for Britain and the European Community any improved relations with the Soviet Union will relate directly to the extent to which the authorities conduct affairs peacefully and with proper respect for basic human rights in all parts of the Soviet Union? Will the right hon. Gentleman give notice that continued violence will severely deter support for economic development in the Soviet Union?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his remarks. I can confirm that we have already made such representations to the Soviet authorities. I deeply deplore the actions in Vilnius and, of course, their tragic consequences. I regard them as unnecessary and undesirable, and I hope that they will never be repeated. I will be happy to pass the right hon. Gentleman's remarks direct to the Soviet authorities.

Sir Trevor Skeet: May I ask the Prime Minister a direct question? In the event of poisonous gas or bacteria being used in the middle east in the event of war, will he reserve the option to use a nuclear device if that is necessary for the protection of our own troops?

The Prime Minister: We have made it very clear to the Iraqis that we would take a very serious view indeed of the use of any chemical or biological weapons, but I must say to my hon. Friend that we have a wide range of weapons and resources at our hands and I do not envisage needing to use the sanction that he suggests.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister realise that he has the overwhelming support of the people of this nation and of this House in his determination to ensure that international law is upheld by the enactment in full of the United Nations resolutions requiring Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait? But does he also realise that, consistent with those terms, it is right to pursue every last possibility for peace? Notwithstanding the fact that the French initiative no doubt has very little chance of success, would not it be wiser to pursue rather then reject it?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his support today and for his strong support in recent weeks, which has been most helpful and much appreciated. We certainly subscribe to the principle of a last appeal to Saddam Hussein to obey the Security Council resolutions and leave Kuwait, but we have considerable reservations about the particular wording proposed by the French, which seems to us materially to weaken the Security Council resolutions and to have some other drawbacks as well. While we subscribe to the principle of a last appeal, I fear that I cannot agree with the precise wording proposed by the French.

Mr. Conway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Iraqis' ability to avoid the effectiveness of sanctions will be aided by the £4 billion worth of gold and foreign reserves looted from Kuwait? Will he assure the House that if we discover that any country breaking sanctions is in receipt of United Kingdom aid, that aid will be stopped immediately?

The Prime Minister: We certainly take a very serious view indeed of sanctions-breaking, when one considers that sanctions have been working and, to a degree, effectively—although, alas, not remotely effectively enough to achieve the end that we wish, which is the removal of the Iraqis from Kuwait. I will certainly bear in mind the advice that my hon. Friend has given me.

Q2. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: When the right hon. Gentleman met President Mitterrand, was he told the details of the French initiative and, if not, why not? If he was told the details, did he have any proposals of his own to make?

The Prime Minister: I am bound to say that I think that the substantive part of the hon. Gentleman's question would be more appropriately directed to President Mitterrand than to me.

Terrorism

Q3. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a further statement on the United Kingdom's contribution to international co-operation against terrorism.

The Prime Minister: We condemn all acts of terrorism wherever and by whomever committed. We shall maintain our firm stand against terrorism at home and overseas. We remain in very close touch with our partners and allies in these matters.

Mr. Hunter: As so many terrorist organisations have declared their support for, or received support from, Saddam Hussein's ally the Palestine Liberation Organisation, can my right hon. Friend assure us that there will be effective international co-operation against acts of terrorism which may be committed in support of Iraq and will he ensure that there will never be any surrender to terrorism?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly confirm the last point to my hon. Friend and I very much hope that his earlier point is also the case. I can also assure him that we take the threat of terrorism very seriously indeed and have taken the appropriate cautionary measures. In particular, we have been urging other Governments to improve security at their airports. Very great vigilance will be required both at home and abroad and we are making it clear to everyone that that will undoubtedly be necessary in the weeks ahead.

Mr. Madden: In view of the gathering support for the French initiative——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a definitive question about terrorism.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the Prime Minister's statement that we take a firm line on terrorism, but in the light of the two recent kamikaze bombings in Londonderry and Fermanagh is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that he is getting full co-operation from the Republic of Ireland?

The Prime Minister: The Irish Government have made clear to us their continuing commitment to cross-border co-operation against terrorism. We will, of course, continue to discuss improvements to that cross-border co-operation, through the mechanism of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as we now have better relations with Syria, urging Syria at the end of this conflict to make peace with Israel would be an extremely good way of ensuring that international terrorism is dealt with?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we have restored our relationship with Syria and we hope that that will herald a greater degree of co-operation between our two countries. I hope that in future Syria will turn away from any form of terrorism.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Galbraith: During the Prime Minister's recent visit to Scotland he re-emphasised his position on the poll tax that nothing was ruled out and nothing was ruled in. Yet in the previous week, when interviewed by David Frost, he said that proposals for the abolition of the poll tax would not arise. Can he explain the apparent contradiction?

The Prime Minister: First, the whole House is pleased to see the hon. Gentleman back in the House and looking a good deal fitter than he was. On his remarks about the community charge, we have repeatedly made the position clear. It is a fundamental review and until it is concluded we cannot be precisely certain about what will emerge. I offered a contingent thought in my early interview with Mr. Frost. What the reality will be, we shall have to see.

Q5. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butler: What urgency does my right hon. Friend give to compensation for coal mining subsidence?

The Prime Minister: I confirm to my hon. Friend that that is an important matter. He will know that the Government have been considering it for some time. I can now confirm to my hon. Friend that it is the Government's intention to bring forward a Bill in the current Session. The Bill will improve the arrangements for compensation and the repair of houses for those affected by mining subsidence and provide for quicker settlement of disputed claims.

Mr. Livingstone: Will the Prime Minister assure the House that the Government have not issued any contingency orders for the printing of call-up papers for men aged 18 to 25 who are unmarried?

The Prime Minister: We have no such arrangements in hand.

Q6. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Currie: Has my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister noted the unanimous vote in the Iraqi National Assembly backing Saddam Hussein in his efforts for war? Does he agree that a unanimous vote in this House today would also demonstrate the determination of Britain, if it must, to put Saddam Hussein to flight and obtain justice for the Kuwaiti people?

The Prime Minister: I most certainly did notice the vote in the Iraqi assembly. I share my hon. Friend's view that the largest possible degree of support from the House for the Government's position would be most welcome, not only as an indication of international solidarity but, perhaps more importantly, as the clearest possible indication to our troops in Saudi Arabia that they have the full and united support of the House.

Mr. Leighton: Having invaded Kuwait to grab the oil, is it not true that Saddam Hussein has been unable to sell a single pint of it and has been unable to sell Iraqi oil either? While the two pipelines are closed, do not those effective sanctions render his position untenable in the long run? Would not it be better to maintain those effective sanctions, rather than resort to the early use of force, which could have unforeseen consequences?

The Prime Minister: I can only say that I wish that the hon. Gentleman was right. The reality is that sanctions have been in force for a considerable period of time. They may have caused some economic harm to Iraq. What they have not done is cause Iraq to remove itself from Kuwait and end the terrorism that is continuing there day after day.

Q7. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that on a cold day such as today, young people should not be sleeping in our streets when they could be in the ample bosom of some kindly landlady who, but for the twin bogey men of the Rent Acts and the taxman, could be encouraged to let spare rooms? On such a cold day as this, we should be concentrating our minds on removing all the obstacles that prevent people from letting rooms in private houses.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend puts the matter most colourfully and is undoubtedly an encouragement to us all. As my hon. Friend will know, we reformed the Rent Acts in 1989 and we believe that the legislation now strikes a better balance between landlord and tenant. None the less, I agree with my hon. Friend that further measures are necessary to increase the supply of rented accommodation. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning will be examining that matter.

Q8. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Trimble: We applaud the Prime Minister's determination that aggression in the Gulf shall not be rewarded and we only hope that the same determination is applied here as well. I refer the Prime Minister to recent press reports about indirect negotiations and contacts between the Northern Ireland Office and Sinn Fein. I ask the right hon. Gentleman for an assurance that there will be no such contacts, direct or indirect, and to ensure that the aggression and terrorism of the IRA and Sinn Fein are not rewarded.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have taken a consistent view that Irish terrorism, or terrorism of any sort, should not be rewarded. That has, been, is and, I assure the hon. Gentleman, will continue to be our position.

Privilege

3.31 pm

Mr. Speaker: I have a short statement to make on a matter of privilege.

I have received a complaint from the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) that the guidelines laid down by the Yorkshire area of the National Union of Mineworkers, in respect of the actions of hon. Members sponsored by the union, are in breach of the privileges of this House. I am satisfied that the complaint raises issues that justify me in granting precedence to a motion relating to it. If the hon. Member now tables such a motion, it will appear as the first item of business tomorrow.

BILL PRESENTED

DECLARATION OF WAR (REQUIREMENT FOR PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL)

Mr. Harry Cohen, supported by Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Tony Benn, Mr. Andrew F. Bennett, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Bernie Grant, Mr. Ken Livingstone, Mr. Max Madden, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Ms. Dawn Primarolo and Mr. Dennis Skinner, presented a Bill to ensure that war cannot be declared on troops committed or kept abroad by Her Majesty's Government without the approval of the House of Commons: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 January and to be printed. [Bill 55.]

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the Value Added Tax (Construction of Dwellings and Land) Order 1990 (S.I., 1990, No. 2553) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Road Traffic (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it after the ten-minute Bill.

Coal Mining Subsidence (Damage Arbitration, Prevention and Public Awareness)

3.32 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish the rights of owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence resulting from the working and getting of coal or of coal and other minerals worked therewith, to full repair or equitable compensation of their properties; to establish an independent arbitration procedure to resolve any disputes that may arise out of such damage or any matters relating thereto; to require any public body or organisation involved in the working or getting of coal and other minerals to take steps to prevent subsidence damage; and to promote public awareness of workings which might give rise to such damage.

I promise the House that I shall not take up its time unduly, as it is clear that there are other important matters in the minds of hon. Members today.

I am glad to use this opportunity to congratulate those people who have been involved in campaigning about coal mining subsidence damage. That campaign has had its effect and it has involved hon. Members on both sides of the House, members of local authorities and the COALS organisation of Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire. That organisation has been deeply involved in the campaign to try to get justice for people whose properties and homes have been damaged by coal mining subsidence. As a result of their efforts and the efforts of hon. Members, we are at last making some headway and there is a light on the horizon for people who have suffered grave injustice in their everyday lives.

I do not want to take up too much time, but I must repeat one fact. Although I am grateful to the Prime Minister for his promise today of a Bill to deal with this problem that will be introduced in this Session, no such Bill is as yet written and ready for hon. Members to read. The Bill that I am proposing today has been sanctioned and supported by all those who have sought to get justice for people who have suffered damage to their property. This year is the fourth occasion on which the Bill has been presented. For four consecutive years the Bill has been presented to the House; four times it has tried to achieve justice. I hope that by this time next year we shall have legislation which will ensure justice for home owners and property owners throughout Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and all the coalfield areas.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Joseph Ashton, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. George J. Buckley, Mr. Martin Redmond and Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie.

COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE ARBITRATION, PREVENTION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS)

Mr. Alan Meale accordingly presented a Bill to establish the rights of owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence resulting from the working and getting of coal or of coal and other minerals worked therewith, to full repair or equitable compensation of their properties; to establish an independent arbitration procedure to resolve

any disputes that may arise out of such damage or any matters relating thereto; to require any public body or organisation involved in the working or getting of coal and other minerals to take steps to prevent subsidence damage; and to promote public awareness of workings which might give rise to such damage: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 25 January and to be printed. [Bill 56.]

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask for your advice on whether it is in order for the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) to introduce his Bill when the Government have already announced that they are to introduce a Bill to compensate victims of subsidence, something which the Labour Government signally failed to do?

Mr. Speaker: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should raise that point. The hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) was perfectly in order. If the House recollects, the announcement that the Government would introduce a Bill was made by the Prime Minister only a few moments ago.

The Gulf

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Prime Minister, may I say that a very large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to participate in this very important debate. I propose to put a limit of 10 minutes on speeches between 6 o'clock and 8 o'clock, but I ask those who are called before that, particularly if they are Privy Councillors, to bear that limit in mind.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since there have been two debates on the Gulf in the past few months, may I ask whether you will give preference to hon. Members who did not speak in those debates?

Mr. Speaker: I shall seek to balance opinion in the House.

3.37 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): There is overwhelming concern in Parliament and in the country about the situation in the Gulf. That concern is shared by everyone, but must self evidently be most acutely felt by the families and friends of our troops at present in the Gulf.

The position has been brought about, first, by Iraq's illegal invasion of Kuwait and, secondly, by its continued and blatant refusal to implement the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and to withdraw wholly and unconditionally from the country which it invaded in early August. It is now five and a half months since the first of the resolutions and the deadline for Iraq to comply runs out today. Therefore, the Government thought it entirely right for the House to debate the situation.

Since we last discussed these matters on 11 December last year, there have been important diplomatic and military developments. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have both visited the middle east to discuss the position with the rulers and with the Governments there. I have recently met President Bush, President Mitterrand, and Secretary Baker for the same purpose and my right hon. Friend has been in constant contact with his European Community colleagues and many others. Yesterday, upon his return from Baghdad, I also spoke at length to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I intend to cover those developments shortly, although I shall not on this occasion go into the detailed background to the present crisis, which was dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) with characteristic clarity last September. I shall, however, report on the various discussions that my right hon. Friend and I have had. I shall then explain why the Government regard full implementation of the United Nations resolutions as being so crucial. Finally, I shall set out to the House how we intend to act.

Before I do so, I should like to make one general point. I hope that this debate will not in any way be seen either here or, perhaps more appropriately, beyond here as a party-political or partisan occasion. With the clear danger of hostilities looming, through no wish of anyone in this country or the House, it seems to me acutely important that our forces in the Gulf should feel that they have the

[The Prime Minister]

united support of the vast majority of the House and of the country. It will be in that spirit in which the Government approach the debate.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East) *rose*——

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I should like to make a little progress, if the hon. Gentlemen will forgive me.

Since the invasion on 2 August the international community has collectively and repeatedly called on Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, 12 Security Council resolutions have been passed, either unanimously or with very substantial majorities, and dozens of visits to Baghdad and appeals to Saddam Hussein have been made by international statesmen from many countries. Most recently, the United States Secretary of State, James Baker, has met Tariq Aziz in Geneva and the Secretary-General of the United Nations has met Saddam Hussein in Baghdad.

Despite all this, Iraq is still in Kuwait and shows no imminent signs of leaving. I fear that the contrary is the case. In recent weeks Iraq has continued to increase the size of its forces in and around Kuwait. There are now nearly 600,000 troops, more than 4,000 tanks and more than 3,000 artillery pieces. Its defences are continually being strengthened. Chemical weapons, already used by Saddam Hussein against his own people, have been deployed. Contrary to international agreements, Iraq has produced and threatened to use both chemical and biological weapons, the use of which would be wholly contrary to international agreements. Iraq also continues to develop a nuclear weapon, although we do not believe thus far that she has succeeded in doing so.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will let me make a little progress, I shall give way to him later.

At the same time, Iraq has constantly and, in my view, cynically changed the pretexts given for its invasion of Kuwait. At various times we have been told that the invasion took place for different reasons: first, because Kuwait had artificially depressed the world price of oil; then because Kuwait had failed to pay compensation to Iraq for lost revenues; and then because it had occupied territory on Iraq's border. We were then told that there had been a coup d'etat in Kuwait and a new Government established that had appealed for Iraqi support. That absurd untruth soon disappeared without trace. Then we were informed that Kuwait had been wholly absorbed into Iraq, and the Iraqi information Minister told the world "to forget that a place called Kuwait had ever existed." It was even suggested that Kuwait had been attacked because it posed a threat to Iraq's security—a notion so absurd that the whole world dismissed it with contempt, and dismissed it immediately.

Finally, we were told, least credibly of all, that the purpose of the invasion had been to bring about a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question. In my discussions in the Gulf, I have found that non-Iraqi Arab leaders are particularly contemptuous of that excuse and have made that crystal clear to me and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. The real fact is that Iraq's action has made a settlement of that longstanding and very real problem infinitely more difficult. Only when Iraq has withdrawn from Kuwait shall we be able to resume efforts to find a solution with any hope of success—and that, of course, we shall seek to continue to do.

Rarely in history can there have been a more cynical catalogue of lies and deceits. The reality is clear for all to see: Iraq has used military force to wipe Kuwait off the face of the map and to plunder its resources. Nor is that all. Intimidation, torture and murder of the Kuwaiti people have continued without respite. The appalling details have been carefully and shockingly catalogued in the report by Amnesty International, which should be compulsory reading for everyone who expresses a view on this issue.

What the report reveals is truly shocking: people executed—in my view, murdered would be a better word—for failing to display a photograph of Saddam Hussein in their homes; teenage boys murdered in the sight of their mothers and sisters, their bodies then left on the street as garbage and their families forbidden to take their corpses home to give them a decent burial. This is literally horrifying, a tale of unbelievable and sickening cruelty since last August.

Those who caution delay because they hate war—hate the very thought of war, as all hon. Members must surely do—must ask themselves this question: how much longer should the world stand by and risk these atrocities continuing in Kuwait?

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Strang *rose*——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

The Prime Minister: We are talking not only of atrocities. Hundreds of thousands of Kuwaitis have been forced to leave their country as a part of a systematic effort to change populations, to expunge records and to erase national identity itself. At the start of August, there were 700,000 Kuwaitis in Kuwait; today there are 250,000, a fall of two thirds. Organised robbery has taken place on a gigantic scale, with everything from cars and buses to medical equipment—even incubators for use in hospitals—being taken away: stolen, ransacked and taken as spoils of war to Iraq.

What we are seeing is not just a simple dispute or everyday difference of opinion. What we are witnessing in Kuwait is an attempt to eliminate an entire state by a dictator who has shown himself to be a thorough force for evil in his actions over recent years.

Despite all this, neither we nor our international partners have given up our efforts to find a peaceful solution on the basis of full implementation of the United Nations resolutions. The United Nations, the European Community, the Arab League and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference have all separately tried to persuade Iraq to comply with the Security Council resolutions. Many individual countries and Governments have made their contribution. And yet, what happened last week when Secretary Baker met the Iraqi Foreign Minister in Geneva to try yet again to bring about a peaceful solution? Tariq Aziz refused even to mention Kuwait or to discuss withdrawal. He showed no flexibility or, shockingly, any remorse for the crimes that have been committed in Kuwait since the beginning of August. And an invitation to Tariq Aziz to meet the European Community was brusquely and immediately rejected and ignored.

Subsequently, as the House knows, the United Nations Secretary-General travelled to Baghdad to offer his good offices. We welcomed that unreservedly. Even at that late stage we hoped that reason would prevail. Mr. Perez de Cuellar's mission had the full support of Britain, of the United States and of the European Community and, I believe, the full support of the whole world community which holds him in such continual respect. Yet his involvement demonstrated, perhaps more clearly than anything else could, that the confrontation is not just between the United States and Iraq or the west and Iraq, but between the United Nations and an aggressor that has overrun a neighbouring small and innocent country.

But I am sorry to report that the Secretary-General's efforts, too, were crudely and brutally brushed aside. When I spoke to him yesterday he told me, without any doubt or hesitation, that there was nothing favourable to report from his meeting with Saddam Hussein; not the slightest sign of willingness to comply with the Security Council resolution either now or in the future.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): In the event of an unprovoked attack on Israel in the days ahead, what would be the British Government's response and what consultation has there been with other Governments about that possibility?

The Prime Minister: Of course that possibility is one which we have been considering, not least because Saddam Hussein has made it clear on a number of occasions that he may seek to involve a nation at present standing wholly adrift from this particular dispute in the way described. I hope very much that that will not happen and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not speculate on what would follow, but I feel sure that the international community, at present part of the allied force, would regard that as a wholly unacceptable way for Iraq to behave and would respond accordingly. I hope very much indeed that the restraint that has been shown by the state of Israel will continue in the weeks ahead. That restraint has been extremely helpful.

In the past 24 hours the House will have seen reports of a French initiative put forward just a few hours after the European Community Foreign Ministers had concluded that the conditions for an initiative no longer existed. It would be more accurate to say that what is involved is an appeal to Saddam Hussein to reconsider and to withdraw even at this late hour, and that is something which we all wish to see. But what I believe we cannot do is to water down the existing Security Council resolutions. We have supported those for a long time. They call for total and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal. Nor can we be party to extending the United Nations deadline or in any way reward Iraq for its aggression.

Those are the criteria on which we would judge any proposal. Saddam Hussein must be given no false expectation that peace can be had without complete and full implementation of the Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I think that the whole House agrees with the Prime Minister that there can be no question of a watering down of existing United Nations resolutions, but, according to the report in *The Independent* today, the French initiative calls on the Security Council to ask Iraq

"to announce without further delay its"—

Iraq's—

"intention to pull out of Kuwait according to a set timetable and to begin now with a rapid and large-scale withdrawal."

Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why he regards that as being a watering down of the terms of the United Nations resolutions?

The Prime Minister: Let me reiterate the point in order to put it in its proper context. We fully subscribe to the idea of a last appeal to Saddam Hussein to obey the Security Council resolutions. We have no difficulty with that point. But we do have considerable difficulty with the French text. All along we have supported the Security Council resolutions and we must judge the French text by two criteria: whether it is wholly consistent with the United Nations Security Council resolutions and whether it is likely to lead Iraq to comply with those resolutions or simply have the effect of taking the pressure off Iraq at this very late stage. In our judgment, it fails those tests and it is for that reason that, although we are content with the idea of a last appeal, we cannot accept and cannot support the particular proposition put forward by the French.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): It would appear that one of the major reasons why the Government reject the French initiative, which I certainly welcome, is the matter of linkage. But is the Prime Minister aware that when the war begins a linkage denied in the conference hall may be established on the battlefield within hours and if Israel is drawn into the conflict the two issues will come together? Is he also aware that, when the war is over, the proposal made by President Mitterrand will be the basis of the peace conference? Why cannot we have the peace proposal before the bloodshed instead of afterwards?

The Prime Minister: As I indicated to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), I did not share the view put forward by the French that their proposal is wholly consistent with the United Nations resolutions as we have thus far known them. Perhaps I may elaborate on that point. The French text only calls on Iraq to announce its intention to withdraw according to a timetable. The Security Council has called for an immediate, total and unconditional withdrawal. There is a distinction. But equally relevant is the fact that I do not think that we would be wise to place much faith in an indication of Iraq's intentions against the background of the lies, deceit and treachery that we have seen in the last six months. There is no basis of trust and therefore we must rely on an appeal either from the Security Council or from the Secretary-General that is wholly and completely consistent with the resolutions that we have supported for so long.

If I add in reply to the right hon. Gentleman a word about my discussion with President Mitterrand, he may find it useful. My clear impression from my discussions with President Mitterrand yesterday is that, like all of us, he hopes and prays that hostilities can be avoided. But particularly in the wake of Iraq's totally negative response to the United Nations Secretary-General, President Mitterrand sees no realistic prospect that Iraq can now be persuaded to take the essential step of withdrawing from Kuwait.

No one, anywhere, can claim that the international community has not tried for peace. If it turns out that we shall have failed, we shall have failed only because Iraq has rejected every attempt to reach a diplomatic solution.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will permit me to make a little more progress.

In parallel with those diplomatic efforts, the international community has, with very few execptions and contraventions, applied economic sanctions against Iraq. As the House knows, they are among the most sweeping sanctions ever agreed by the United Nations. They have interrupted 90 per cent. of Iraq's foreign trade and have caused widespread dislocation of its economy.

What is the real test of the sanctions? It is not just whether they cause economic misery in Iraq. The real test is whether they bring about Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. So far, they have failed to achieve that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give them time to work."] I will deal precisely with the points that Opposition Members want to raise, if they will give me a moment. It is clear that the sanctions will not succeed by the deadline set by the United Nations for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, or for a very long time after that.

There are those who argue—and I understand their concern—that we should give sanctions more time to work. But at what price should we give them more time to work? Allowing more time for sanctions to work has other implications.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): The Prime Minister has again referred to the tragic plight of the people of Kuwait, of whom perhaps 2,000 have already been killed since the beginning of August. What does the right hon. Gentleman think would be the effect on the people of Kuwait of a war to reconquer Kuwait? Has he read the report in today's *Financial Times* in which one of the leading members of the al-Sabah family, speaking from the comfort of his luxury hotel in Dhahran, hundreds of miles from the fighting line, said that he would be quite happy to see the "flattening" of Kuwait if it meant that he got back sovereignty of the territory? Does the Prime Minister really think that that sort of war will do anything to help the people of Kuwait?

The Prime Minister: The liberation of Kuwait is an important principle. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, other important principles are at stake in this dispute and in a few moments I will deal with them at some length. If the right hon. Gentleman will permit me, I shall return to the point about the time taken for sanctions to work. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I will return to the points raised earlier about sanctions, to which the House is entitled to a reply. The point that was concerning the House was whether we should give sanctions more time to work. I said that more time for sanctions has other implications. It also means more time for Iraq to continue to extinguish Kuwait. It means more time for Iraq to prepare its defences against allied troops and perhaps a greater subsequent cost in the lives of allied troops. It means more time during which Kuwaitis will be tortured or killed. Because sanctions are not having their intended effect, we would, in addition, in practice be extending the deadline for Iraq's withdrawal while relaxing pressure on Iraq to comply.

Mr. Strang *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall continue.

To do so would destroy the credibility of the international community's response to Iraq's aggression and that is why I do not believe that we have the time, nor would we be wise, to let sanctions run a lengthier and fuller course. That is the situation we face.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Prime Minister: If hon. Members will forgive me, I shall make a little more progress.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that every hon. Member who is rising to intervene is anxious to take part in the debate. They will not be able to do so if there are constant interruptions.

The Prime Minister: The situation that I have just outlined is the situation we must face. Throughout recent months the Government have taken great care to consult their allies, the United States, Europe and—perhaps most important of all in many ways—the Arab world. Last week I met the Emir of Kuwait, the King of Saudi Arabia, the Sultan of Oman and President Mubarak.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has just returned from visits to other Gulf states, as well as Jordan and Turkey, on which he will report in his winding-up speech. Earlier this week I spoke to Mr. Mulroney, Secretary Baker and President Mitterrand——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Blood on their hands.

The Prime Minister: I wish that the hon. Gentleman would show as much concern for the blood in Kuwait City in the past few months.

Throughout my visits I found a rock-solid determination to make Saddam Hussein withdraw. Among our allies there was no talk of compromise, no talk of concessions, no suggestion that the United Nations' deadline should be extended and no inclination whatsoever to weaken or back down in the face of Iraq's intransigence. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Has the hon. Gentleman a point of order for me?

The Prime Minister: The resolve of our Arab allies to see the United Nations resolutions implemented remains unshaken and unshakeable—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Blunkett: Does the Prime Minister accept that many of us agree with what he has just said about the need to stand rock solid over the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, but we would be better able to assess for ourselves the effectiveness of sanctions if we had before us an assessment of how sanctions had worked, the loopholes that existed and what might be done to close them? Does he accept that people like myself, who are willing to agree that there should be greater caution today of all days, are also clear that, if professional troops have to be used to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, we would back it if we had the information that he has to enable us to make the judgment that he is making? Will he give the elected Parliament that information so that we can make that judgment for ourselves?

The Prime Minister: I have two points to make in reply to the hon. Gentleman's intervention. First, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will deal in his winding-up speech specifically with the details of the impact of sanctions. Secondly, the overall purpose of sanctions is to ensure that Iraq leaves Kuwait. So far they have failed in that respect and show no sign of imminent success.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall make some progress.

It is to restore the independence of Kuwait, to defend Saudi Arabia and to back up these diplomatic efforts and the peaceful pressure of sanctions that more than 30 nations have contributed to the multinational effort in the Gulf. Over the past few weeks, the scale of those forces has grown steadily. They now contribute an awesome assembly of military power, on a scale not seen since the second world war.

Britain's contribution to that force numbers more than 35,000 service men and women. I was able to meet a number of them last week while I was in the Gulf. I can tell the House with no equivocation that their morale is high, their professionalism obvious and their confidence impressive. They have the equipment that they need and the determination that we would expect of them. They are working well with their American and other allies.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

I explained to those service men and women while I was there why we had to ask them to be there and what might lie ahead. I told them, too, of the great concern felt for them by everyone at home, as well as the tremendous pride here in their performance in the Gulf. I am in no doubt whatever that they understand the risks and the dangers, as professional service men. They know what they may be asked to do.

Mr. Skinner: You are not going to risk your life, are you?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not make accusations of that kind from a sedentary position. It does not add to a debate on such an important matter.

Mr. Skinner: Yesterday, my hon. Friends and I demanded a vote on whether we go to war—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must sit down.

The Prime Minister: Let me just say to the hon. Gentleman in all sincerity that, whatever he may think, I would have been proud to be there with those young men and women. As professional service men, they know what they may be asked to do. They left me in no doubt that they are both able and ready to do it.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As one who has a son in the Gulf, may I ask my right hon. Friend to explain the exact chain of command from the President of the United States through General Schwarzkopf to the British commanders in the field? Is he satisfied that the British Government are able to make their contribution to that chain of command?

The Prime Minister: The troops in the Gulf are under British command and under American tactical control. The degree of liaison in the relationship between both commanders and men in the Gulf was—on the evidence of my own eyes—very high and very impressive. My hon. Friend would have been perfectly satisfied with it had he been there.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that I have given way a number of times. I am conscious that a large number of right hon. and hon. Members wish to express their own views, and I want to leave them some time in which to do so.

Peaceful means of persuading Iraq to withdraw—the diplomatic efforts, the sanctions and the allied military presence—have been tried for six months now, but without success. A line has to be drawn somewhere and it has been drawn—not hastily by us or by any one state, but deliberately and collectively by the United Nations Security Council with resolution 678.

From tomorrow the situation changes. We continue to hope and to look for a peaceful solution, but from tomorrow we shall also be justified in using all necessary means of bringing about Iraq's withdrawal; and that includes the use of force. That is not a pleasant prospect, but, as we face it, let us never forget that the decision to use force was first taken by Saddam Hussein entirely of his own choosing when he chose to invade Kuwait.

The principles at stake are crucial and we must uphold them. First—I hope that this is not too simplistic, but I feel it deeply—there is a clear dividing line between what is right and what is wrong and what Saddam Hussein has done in Kuwait is, in the simplest and clearest terms, just plain wrong and unforgivable.

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

The Prime Minister: I am surprised that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has so little interest in the principles at stake in this matter that he is unwilling to listen to them.

Secondly——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

The Prime Minister: Secondly—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) is seeking to take part in the debate. He will not be able to do so if Saddam Hussein behaves in that way.

The Prime Minister: Secondly, if Saddam Hussein were to get away with his aggression and gain from it, other small countries in the vicinity, and those elsewhere in the world with large and potentially aggressive neighbours, will all too likely face similar problems and similar dangers. That is the second reason why there can be no deals, no partial withdrawal and no artificial linkage to solutions of other problems—nothing but absolute commitment to implement the Security Council's resolutions in full and without delay.

Thirdly, the failure to secure Saddam Hussein's withdrawal would have grave implications for the balance of power throughout the middle east. It would mean putting off difficulties today at the expense of greater difficulties in the not-too-distant future—greater difficulties made more intransigent as Iraq acquires even more devastating and dangerous weapons and as its appetite for success and conquest grows.

But there is a fourth, overriding point. We have made progress, particularly over the past 12 months, towards establishing in many ways a more peaceful world in which there is greater respect for the United Nations and its resolutions. At last it has seemed that the United Nations

[The Prime Minister]

might live up to the aspirations of its founders. All our hopes for that would fall away if we were to allow Saddam Hussein to get away with swallowing up Kuwait in the way that he proposes. It simply cannot, must not and will not be permitted. So, if we are to have that safe world, we must demonstrate conclusively that aggression cannot succeed. If we fail to do so, when nearly the whole world is united against Iraq, we will face a heavy penalty ourselves for any future aggression. Much of the responsibility would rest with us.

For all those reasons, we have all made it clear to Saddam Hussein that he must withdraw. We have also made it clear that if he leaves Kuwait and returns within the borders of Iraq, force will not be used against him. Let me reiterate that point: if he voluntarily retreats and withdraws into Iraq, he will not be attacked there. But if he does not leave, force will be used and he will be expelled from Kuwait.

Mr. Dalyell *rose—*

The Prime Minister: Will the hon. Gentleman forgive me?

I hope that Saddam Hussein understands the sheer weight of the forces that are ranged against him and the scale of armour and equipment which the multinational alliance has at its disposal. If he realises that, he will also realise that he cannot win and that the only consequence of failing to withdraw is to bring about the destruction of his armed forces and great damage to his country.

We do not want a conflict. We are not thirsting for war, but if it comes I believe that it would be a just war. However great the costs of such a war might be, they would be less than those that we would face if we failed to stand up for the principle of what is right, and to stand up for it now. I believe that if Iraq does not withdraw, the time has come to make a stand.

But even now it is not too late for Saddam Hussein to relent and to pull out his forces. We have always seen the possibility that he will do that at the very last moment, but I must tell the House that we see no sign at present that that is likely. None the less, we must hope that he sees sense. We must hope that he does not force the allies to fight. But let him be under no misapprehension at all: if necessary, we will commit our forces to fight. From tomorrow, we are ready, with our allies, to do whatever is necessary to implement the resolutions of the United Nations in full to ensure that Iraqi forces leave Kuwait without condition, without delay and without reward.

Over the months, we have worked for peace and we have hoped for peace; but we are prepared for war, and the choice must be Saddam Hussein's.

4.16 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): From the outset of this crisis, caused by the aggresson of Iraq against Kuwait, it has been clear that, in the interests of the whole world community, the will of the United Nations must prevail and Iraq must quit Kuwait completely and unconditionally. It is also clear that great devastation would result from a war. It would therefore be best, if at all possible, for the purposes of the United Nations to be achieved without further use of force, with sanctions and the blockade being given the maximum time to have effect.

It is plainly the case, too, that if it should become certain that the objectives of the United Nations can be achieved only by the use of armed force against Iraq, as authorised by Security Council resolution 678, such force would then have to be used.

As a result of United Nations decisions, the strictest economic sanctions in history and the most complete blockade ever have been enforced. Iraq can buy nothing; Iraq can sell nothing. The Iraqi economy is being severely impoverished, most of Iraqi industry is almost at a standstill and there are, according to the CIA, severe shortages of what it calls "critical commodities", particularly meat and other important foodstuffs. Faced by that and by the huge military forces deployed against him, Saddam Hussein cannot now fail to understand the seriousness of the world's intentions.

As his record shows, Saddam Hussein is, of course, not a man to be impressed or concerned about the scale of the suffering and the sacrifices endured by the Iraqi people. But he must be aware of the fact that, if he does not comply with the decisions of the United Nations, he risks the fate that he has so often inflicted on those whom he rules.

In the months since he invaded Kuwait, Saddam Hussein has offered excuses for his action and has put forward conditions for his withdrawal: none is valid. He has claimed that economic grievances were the cause of his aggression, but he must know now that they can be addressed only if he quits Kuwait. Even if there had been legitimacy in his assertions that Iraq had claims to Kuwait oil, that would not have justified invasion and it would most certainly not have excused the barbarism against innocent Kuwaitis and people of other countries in that land.

Saddam Hussein has claimed that if he completely withdrew he would still be attacked, but those claims have long been met with firm and solemn undertakings—the latest from the Prime Minister this afternoon—that such action will not be taken if he gets out of Kuwait.

Saddam has claimed that he wants to link withdrawal to the plight of the Palestinian people. That claim is, to say the least, cynical. His brutality against his own people, against the Kurdish people and, since 2 August, against the Kuwaiti people deny him any humanitarian credentials. The concern that he has professed for the Palestinians since August is rather too recent to be very convincing. Whatever his other illusions, he cannot believe that there is any realistic possibility of convening an international conference on the middle east and United Nations resolution 681 until the implementation of United Nations resolution 660.

Plainly, there can be no beginning for a conference while there is continuing occupation. Saddam Hussein's presence in Kuwait, far from being the means of propelling the international community into tackling Arab-Israeli conflict and the misery of the Palestinians, is preventing it. By maintaining his aggression, Saddam Hussein is not fostering international action for the Palestinians; he is blocking it.

In such circumstances, trading the immediate convening of a conference for a promise to consider withdrawal would not be the course to peace and stability; it would lead in the opposite direction. If that were to occur, Saddam Hussein would retain his current power in Iraq. He would keep intact his conventional, biological and chemical weapons. He would go on developing nuclear

arms capacity. He would be a ready provider of arms to terrorists and oppressors anywhere in the world. He would have the status of a hero among parts of the population in the middle east and elsewhere. He would therefore pose a perpetual threat to the security of the region and, indeed, of the wider world.

To make concessions to Saddam Hussein before withdrawal would leave him with great strength. It would not mean war prevented; it would mean no more than war postponed, and postponed only to a time when the potential for mass destruction is even greater than it is now.

These factors mean that there continues to be no justification for conceding anything that would erode the basic United Nations requirements; nor is there any reason to relax the view, which I put on a previous occasion to the House, that even if ultimately Saddam Hussein retains his "position in his country", he

"cannot be allowed to retain his power to jeopardise the region."—[*Official Report*, 6 September 1990; Vol. 177, c. 750.]

If Saddam Hussein were to accept that he should retain his power to jeopardise the region, it would light the fuse for God knows what in the future. That is what we must recognise. All of us in this place and throughout the world who seek peace and stability must recognise that basic point about the nature, regime, record and ambition of Saddam Hussein, dictator of Iraq. That much is very straightforward.

Tragically, Saddam Hussein is not the only dictator in the world or the only tyrant in the region—far from it. He is certainly a monster whom the countries now ranged against him have helped to grow. All of that is true. All of it is a bitter lesson for the future conduct of policy by democracies, but none of it changes the fact that it is his aggression, his present and potential power and his menace to the region that must now be reversed without reward. All of us could draw up a supportable, desirable agenda for addressing the atrocities committed by dictators all over this planet. But we know very well that what we have to do now is to address the one posing the most direct threat to the stability of a region and the peace of the world.

There can, of course, be a sequence of events that relates United Nations resolution 681 and the establishment of an international conference to resolution 660 and the withdrawal from Kuwait. But that sequence must begin with the unconditional ending of occupation as specifically required by the United Nations, supported by this country and, at its conference and at all other times, by the party that I lead. That is vital because of the critically important need to get Iraq out of Kuwait. But it is also vital because the authority of the United Nations to be the major instrument for international security in the future is now directly at stake. If, for any reason, the writ of the United Nations does not run in the Gulf, the organisation will, at best, be condemned to return to the role to which it was confined by the rigidities of the years of the cold war. The United Nations will then never achieve its full purpose and full status as a means of arresting and deterring the violence that is the cause of so much of the world's misery and so much of the world's poverty.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that the argument for those of us who are opposed to the use of force is not whether the writ of the United Nations should run in the Gulf, but how it should run, and whether there is a way to implement international law and sanctions that will avoid a massive carnage at the end of the 20th century?

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I am making the case—and will develop it—for doing everything possible to secure the objectives of the United Nations without the use of force, if that is possible. However, I must say to the hon. Gentleman that if his view is that there are no circumstances—at any time or anywhere—in which force can be used, I should respect his views as those of a pacifist and I should fight to defend his right to hold that opinion. However, the fact remains that, as the instance of the crisis is the most ruthless aggression, as occupation is maintained by aggression, as a threat continues and as it could be forestalled only by the deployment of force, we are not warmongering when we say that the writ of the United Nations should run against Saddam Hussein and his aggression.

If the writ did not run, aggressors—large and small—would be able to act with even greater impunity. Our best chance in this generation for building global security would have been abandoned. If that were to be the outcome of the first post-cold war test of the United Nations, those here and elsewhere who, like the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas)—who is entirely sincere and supportable in his view—desire peace in the Gulf and peace in the world would get less of it.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this party at least has been wholly consistent in its support of the United Nations? We supported the United Nations in 1956 against aggression committed by a Tory Government. We are now supporting the United Nations and international law against a terrorist dictatorship which has committed blatant and criminal aggression in Kuwait.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out the historic and current truth that our support for the United Nations has been consistent. It is a matter of some pride to me that, thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), commitment to the United Nations appears in the constitution of the party that I lead. I am glad of that. I also consider—[*Interruption.*] It was a notable contribution by my right hon. Friend, and people throughout the party recognise that.

There is now a great opportunity and I hope that everyone who has ever sought the asset of the United Nations to try to resolve the tensions and difficulties of the world will take note of it. It could be the case—and I place it no more highly than that—that if, especially by peaceful means, the United Nations can secure the objectives of its resolution 660 in the Gulf, we shall not have to preface our description of and concern about the woes of the world with the phrase, "If only the United Nations had some power". There is the possibility of at least the foundations—if not the full edifice—of power and authority for the United Nations being built now. In the Chamber today, and in the vote tonight, hon. Members should recognise that part of the reason for their vote must be the endorsement of the legitimacy of United Nations resolutions 660 to 678.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): There is confusion about the decision to vote tonight. Technically, the House is debating a motion that the House should adjourn. To make matters clear to those inside and outside the House who are watching and listening to this debate, this whole issue—the most important that the House has debated since 1939—should have been debated on a substantive motion. There is no point in my right hon. Friend lecturing us on how we should vote or what the effect of our vote will be if those on the Front Benches have connived in the adoption of the present procedural position.

Mr. Kinnock: I would not dream of lecturing my hon. Friend, who is a dear friend, but I can offer him some friendly instruction. There was no question of connivance or contrivance of any description whatever between those on the Front Benches on the motion. Moreover, although it would be desirable, helpful and useful to have a substantive motion to discuss, I do not think that there is any conscious citizen in the United Kingdom, watching our proceedings and concerned about the prospects in the Gulf, who does not understand what the issues at stake really are and how hon. Members will act in the debate and vote. To think otherwise would be to misunderstand the level of comprehension of the people of our country.

A subject that exercises many hon. Members' minds is the prolonged agonised condition of the middle east. There is a great need to control and remove weapons of mass destruction throughout the middle east—in every country. There is a great need to end the misery of the Palestinians —the injustice that they suffer—and the insecurity of the Israelis. There is a great need to promote economic development and uproot the poverty that fosters extremism and fundamentalism. There is a great need, in short, for a middle east security strategy to address all these issues. But without a United Nations which has the necessary influence and power, such an enterprise—which I know is sought by the Foreign Secretary and many others, right across the Labour party and elsewhere—will never be undertaken, let alone achieved. That is why the full authority of the United Nations must now be upheld and that must be done by supporting the resolutions on the Gulf crisis—from 660 through to 678.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kinnock: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but I have already given way and I am conscious of the time.

There is no serious person who would not greatly prefer the objectives of the United Nations, set out in resolution 660 and restated in subsequent resolutions, to be attained by sanctions rather than by armed conflict. That is plain common sense, especially when the costs of warfare are so huge. There can be no one who does not realise that war would be massively destructive in the region and that unknown numbers of innocents and combatants would be killed and terribly injured. There can be no one who does not recognise that the consequences of the impact of a Gulf war on the world economy may be severe for many countries and ruinous for many of the poorest.

Those are not the only potential costs of warfare. In our debate on 6 September 1990, several right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House raised important political questions relating to the reaction which could come from many Arab people, depending on the way in which we deal with the crisis. Those considerations still stand. Indeed, they have been sharpened by subsequent events. We have the grim assessment of the former ambassador to Iraq, Sir John Moberley, speaking in the BBC "On the Record" programme on Sunday. He said that war in the Gulf

"is unlikely to have a clear-cut ending. It will leave a messy and unpredictable political situation.

Secondly, there will be an increase in extremism and terrorism in the area, arising from resentment, particularly if there's no progress on Palestine.

Thirdly, the long-term security arrangements in the region may cause problems, particularly if the United States is seen to be taking the lead. It would be much better to come under the auspices of the Security Council.

And, finally, there's a problem if Iraq begins to disintegrate with the possibility of the Iranians wanting to establish a Shi'ite regime in the south."

That is a bleak analysis, made all the more sombre by its realism. It is a considerable argument for using the cumulative pressures of sanctions and the blockade until it can be shown that those pressures cannot and will not secure the objective of getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait.

A war in the Gulf may ultimately have to be fought. In that case, military victory will be won by the forces against Iraq. But here and now we must consider in this House not just what happens in the approach to war but what happens after such a war. What Sir John Moberley called the

"messy and unpredictable political situation"

that will result from the crisis must, together with the potential scale of destruction and probable economic turmoil, be taken into full account. They are essential elements in reaching a judgment about ending reliance on blockade and sanctions and the timing and use of force. No one in the House should neglect those considerations.

Giving proper attention to those factors does not mean that we can or should be diverted from the purpose of achieving the objectives of the United Nations and securing the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. It means that, in the course of pursuing such a purpose, we must address the inseparable need to achieve durable peace and order in the region. In doing that, I do not argue for relying on sanctions alone or for relying on sanctions indefinitely. I have never done that. From the outset of the crisis, it has been obvious that, in the nature of Saddam Hussein's record, regime and actions, sanctions alone could never be enough to prevent his further aggression, either in August or at some subsequent time. Neither would they be enough by themselves to show that the world would settle for nothing less than his departure from Kuwait. That is why it was right for the substantial multinational force speedily to be deployed in the Gulf region. It was right for the United Nations to give navies —as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) continually sought—the power to maintain the blockade with force if necessary. It was right for the United Nations in resolution 678 to authorise the use of "all necessary means" to uphold and implement the decisions of the Security Council.

As the military commitment patently has to be made, no one in the United Nations and no one who supports the United Nations could at any point justifiably say to Saddam Hussein or imply to him, "We shall go this far but never, in any circumstances, go any further." If that was ever done, it would completely contradict the very effect which the combined weight of sanctions, isolation and

military readiness is intended to produce. We continue to urge the use of that combination. We do so in the hope that it can still achieve compliance with the United Nations resolutions and in the belief that the purposes of longer-term peace and stability in the region could best be served in that way.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House and the nation how long he would wait and how many Kuwaitis would have to suffer and die before he would act?

Mr. Kinnock: I shall come to that specific point shortly, but in the meantime I will say this. The argument of concern and support for the Kuwaiti people is a good argument. However, it has to be said that when faced with the alternatives of non-violent means or war to secure the clearance of Kuwait by Iraq, the balance must come down in favour of avoiding war if possible and against concern for the Kuwaiti people. The reason for that is straightforward. I know that the hon. Gentleman speaks with sincere concern and he will be aware that, given the size of the settled areas and of Kuwait City, in any conflict the nature of the bombardment that will take place aerially and from elsewhere means that those areas will be utterly devastated with incalculable casualties.

Part of the reason for making the argument for the longest possible use of sanctions in no sense represents a concession to Saddam, acquiesence or appeasement; it is to do with trying to ensure that the kill rate is as low as possible and kept as low as possible. God forbid that any one extra person should be lost if it is at all possible to prevent that.

The force of the combined pressure should be continually deployed, but we must recognise the reality, which I am sure hon. Members on both sides do readily. There is no doubt that there are substantial stresses and problems in maintaining the current scale of allied forces at high readiness over a long period in an extremely difficult climate in the desert. However, it is clear that, if there is any possibility of achieving Iraqi withdrawal without war, such problems will be of a different order from those arising from the results of war. That is true not only in terms of human sacrifice and suffering, but in terms of harm to the world economy and the consequential political instability. That is why 15 January should not be regarded as the date of ultimatum. It is the reason why the climate in the Arabian desert and the proximity of Ramadan, although very important, should not be allowed to be the sole factors determining the course of events. It is the reason why all efforts short of war should be exploited for as long as possible before force is used. [HON. MEMBERS: "How long?"] As I said earlier, until it can be shown beyond doubt that the only means of securing the objectives of the United Nations is by resort to force.

The information required to make that judgment is by definition denied generally, but what we have known from the outset is that the original prognostications about the effects of sanctions and much subsequent evidence prove that there is a tight noose around the neck of Saddam Hussein. For every possible reason—economic, social, humane and military—there must be a substantial argument, especially when the conditions after war are taken into account, for trying to maintain our position for as long as possible without resorting to force. That is the case I am making. I am not saying that force should be prohibited or the case for it dismissed; it should be the last resort and not the eager resort sought by some Conservative Members, although not by the Prime Minister.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kinnock: I shall not give way, as I have already done so several times and I do not want to stretch the patience of the House.

There is speculation that the continuation of reliance on sanctions would, in the near future, produce some weakening of international support for action against Saddam Hussein. In reality, however, there is no available evidence to sustain that view. On the contrary, among those nations that have committed forces, what we might call the western countries have every reason to sustain their stance. The Arab countries have every possible interest in pursuing to success the strategy of getting Saddam out of Kuwait since they are most directly subject to the menace posed by his regime with its present conquest and regional power. In the wider world community, nations large and small need the United Nations to prevail. All have cause to ensure that Iraq does not control a substantial share of world oil reserves in that country and in Kuwait. Those factors support the case for further intense pressures to be exerted for as long as possible.

If, in the wake of the weary and fruitless mission of Perez de Cuellar—I join the Prime Minister in regretting the fact that his mission was not more productive—there is still some surviving chance that the aggression of Saddam Hussein can be reversed without reward and without war, that chance must be pursued to its fullest possibility. That is why it is right for the French and other Governments to continue diplomatic efforts even if the deadline is passed. Certainly they should not be inhibited even as we examine the details of what is proposed.

So much is at risk in war, most of all, as you know very well yourself, Mr. Speaker, for those who fight in that war. Therefore, those who make the commitment to warfare need to be sure that there is no other possible way. They must be sure beyond doubt that war in the immediate future is the only way in which to achieve Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and sure that it is the essential way in which to maintain the alliance. Above all, they must be sure that that is the best way in which to ensure future stability in the region.

The United Nations has decided that Saddam Hussein's aggression must end in complete, unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait.

Mr. Ron Brown: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Kinnock: No. I have already made that plain.

The United Nations has decided that Saddam Hussein's aggression must end in the restoration of international peace and security in the area. I and, as a matter of policy, my party support the decision of the United Nations. Although we and the Government may differ about the best means to implement those decisions, the support of the Labour party for our forces, if they are engaged, is natural, clear and total.

In the variety of discussions that have taken place some say that I should, as they put it, "distance" myself from the

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Government. I will not distance myself from our basic and complete commitment to fulfilling resolution 660. I will not distance myself from the United Nations and from our forces when they face danger. I will not distance myself from the reality. In government we would simply not have the privilege of dropping a note to all world dictators to say, "Would you please be good enough to act like civilised human beings for the duration of a Labour Government and not invade anybody?" That is reality, a reality which all of us who seek to govern this country in justice must and do recognise.

When I vote tonight I shall vote in the same way and for the same reasons as I have done since our first debate on 7 September. I shall continue to be consistent with the objectives that I set out then and with the adopted policy of the Labour party at its conference. I shall act to ensure that neither Saddam Hussein nor anyone else can represent the subtleties of voting in this House of Commons in this democracy as being in any way a concession to his aggression. I shall vote in support of the United Nations because, for all our sakes, the purposes and authority of the United Nations must prevail.

4.48 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): As I have been privileged to take part in the two earlier debates in the House, I shall do my utmost to obey your instruction to be brief, Mr. Speaker, so that the large number of hon. Members who have not yet taken part may have an opportunity to do so.

First, I should remind the House of the statement of the Secretary of State for Defence in our debate on 7 September, when he said:

"We are not there to attack Kuwait or Iraq. We are there to defend Saudi Arabia . . . That is the present position, and it is absolutely clear."—[*Official Report*, 7 September 1990; Vol. 177, c. 842.]

We are now in an entirely different position. There comes a time when Governments and Members of the House should step back a few paces and ask how have we got here, what has led us to this, and what we should do next. The decisions that the Government may have to make in a comparatively short time are some of the most crucial since September 1939.

The second point of which I wish to remind the House is the wording of resolution 660, to which both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition have rightly referred. Paragraph 1 condemns the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. On that there is no disagreement. The Leader of the Opposition made an eloquent denunciation of President Saddam Hussein, but all these things were known throughout the eight years in which he was attacking Iran and he was then built up by the United States and by the Soviet Union, and after 1964-65, in a non-armament way, by the British themselves. There is nothing new about this. Therefore, what sometimes makes the rest of the world a little suspicious of such eloquence is the fact that we now have rediscovered the United Nations and apparently have discovered these attitudes and aspects of President Saddam.

The second paragraph of the United Nations resolution

"demands that Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces to the positions in which they were located on 1 August 1990".

That is constantly said to be United Nations policy.

The third paragraph

"calls upon Iraq and Kuwait to begin immediately intensive negotiations for the resolution of their differences".

It does not say that Iraq must first withdraw from Kuwait and then discussions follow; the two are simultaneous. Obviously he cannot withdraw overnight. There has to be an arrangement, preferably supervised by the United Nations, for his withdrawal from Iraq. The third paragraph continues:

"and supports all efforts in this regard"—

therefore, President Mitterrand can be wholeheartedly supported under the United Nations resolution—

"and especially those of the League of Arab States".

Therefore, everything that is done by the Arab countries to achieve a peaceful solution can be supported.

If the differences which exist, and are well known, between Kuwait and Iraq are to be resolved, the argument that in no circumstances must anything be done which could be pointed to by President Bush or anybody else as being at least face saving or a gain for President Saddam does not enter into it, because United Nations policy is that at the same time the differences between Kuwait and Iraq should be negotiated. That is the point which has been overlooked consistently, or ignored deliberately, by the President of the United States and, I regret to say, by our own Government. It was not mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this afternoon. It is of equal importance, and it is to come about at the same time.

The issue at stake is what could become a major war. We have heard some of the appalling consequences from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and from the Leader of the Opposition. The consequences are appalling not only for Kuwait and for Iraq but for the whole of the middle east. The effect on the oil wells could be immensely damaging to large areas around them; the use of chemical and biological weapons could cause immense harm to other parts of the world and could result in complete chaos in the middle east. Because of all this, the United Nations was absolutely right to concentrate on resolving the differences between the two countries as much as on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait itself.

The last resolution of the United Nations is not mandatory but permissive. The date of 15 January was fixed—I understand, very largely at the inducement of the Soviet Union—in order to prevent the United States from making an earlier attack upon Iraq. On the point made by the Leader of the Opposition about the character of President Saddam Hussein and the possibilities after the affair is settled one way or the other, one can only deal with the President himself if one invades and captures Iraq, and one can only deal with the weapons which he possesses, or any developments towards atomic weapons, if one invades and takes over Iraq—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—unless there is a means of getting a complete security operation instituted in the middle east as a whole. That means that Israel has to be included in the operation and that the lands taken over by Israel must be surrendered in the same way as Kuwait has to be surrendered. That is governed by resolution 242, which has been on record for 23 years, and nothing has happened about it.

Mr. Strang: The whole House respects the way in which the right hon. Gentleman has applied himself to the issue. Earlier he said, rightly, that the so-called phased withdrawal in the French initiative was consistent with the United Nations resolution. Since the Prime Minister

sought to argue in his speech that the Mitterrand initiative is inconsistent with the United Nations resolution, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman where the inconsistency is? The Prime Minister did not tell us. Some of us are inclined to the view that the French initiative may be wholly in line with the United Nations resolution.

Mr. Heath: I should like to see on paper exactly what President Mitterrand is suggesting. If he is suggesting that there should be a middle east conference to deal with these problems, I believe that he is entirely within the context of the resolution. President Bush has recently emphasised that he has constantly called for a middle east conference; therefore, I do not understand why he cannot say now that there will be a conference. For those who are always shouting for dates, he could give a date for it, provided the rest of the resolution was carried out.

On the question of dates, I would have been entirely against fixing 15 January as a withdrawal date because of what will happen. War will not be started by the end of 15 January.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Why not?

Mr. Heath: My hon. Friend can ask the Government; certainly it will not be started. President Saddam Hussein can then say, "Look, they said that 15 January was a deadline—and what has happened? Nothing." It gives him that point to argue. Similarly, if a date is fixed for the end of sanctions, that will give him another opportunity later to argue, "As sanctions have not brought me down, it shows that I am winning." That is what we must avoid in international affairs in dealing with such a situation and with someone like President Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): May I put to my right hon. Friend with all respect a possible fallacy in one of the arguments which he has just put to the House, namely, the case for naming a date now for a conference on the middle east after any war? Surely the resolution of such a conference would require the agreement of the state of Israel, and the state of Israel is hardly likely to be conducive to making concessions at any such conference if it is clear that the conference has been called over the duress of trying to prevent a war. Even those who would like to see a conference and a resolution of the middle east problems should pin no faith or hope on calling for a date for such a conference now. For that reason, there can be and must be no linkage.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Heath: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend and those behind me who are cheering. I am not demanding a date. I said what I did in order to help those who were shouting just now for a date for the end of sanctions. If they want dates for that, they should have dates for other things. I am not asking for a date for the conference on the middle east. If President Mitterrand is going to arrange it, I want to agree that there should be such a conference. As has been said so often in the past, I see no reason why we should say we cannot have it now because it would allow President Saddam Hussein to save face. With President Kennedy's solution to the Cuban missile crisis, as on all such great occasions in history, the objective was to allow President Khrushchev to save face. President Kennedy did that and so avoided a third world war, which was right.

Everybody knew at the time that sanctions could not possibly be effective in four to five months. But all the signs are that they are bound to be effective—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—because it is the one case in the modern world in which a country is cut off. It is cut off from revenue and supplies. Those who say that sanctions took 15 years to work with Rhodesia should remember that we knew all the time that South Africa was not going to comply.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: It will take 15 years with Iraq.

Mr. Heath: I shall give my hon. Friend a little map. Iraq is quite differently placed as a country. Unless we put a naval blockade on South Africa, which was impractical for us, we knew that South Africa would go on supplying Rhodesia. What is more, we were constantly under pressure from President Kaunda and those north of Rhodesia to keep open the lines from South Africa through Rhodesia in order to keep those countries going. That was why it took 15 years. The case of Iraq is quite different. All its petrol sales have been cut off. The only case that I have so far seen drawn to public attention——

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar) *rose*

Mr. Heath: I shall give way in a moment.

The only attempt so far to break sanctions was made by a Russian ship that was apparently keeping President Hussein supplied with Soviet weapons. That in itself points to a danger—a great danger bearing in mind the events in the Baltic states and all the questions opened up about President Gorbachev's future and whether we are now returning to a regime that is much more like the cold war. Where are all our forces and what will Europe do in the event of the re-establishment of the Soviet military? What about the position of Russia with regard to the United States and the rest of Europe? Those issues must also be taken into account because they are desperately serious.

We should continue with sanctions and do all that we can to ensure that they are successful in obtaining the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. Ultimately, the world may come to believe that force is necessary. We must then be fully aware of all the consequences of using force. But until then—*[Interruption.]* There is no point in asking, when is that exactly?

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North East): One problem is that, while we prevaricate and wait for sanctions to work, Saddam Hussein may develop a nuclear capability. What will happen to our troops sitting out there on our behalf waiting for sanctions to work?

Mr. Heath: On the first question, it is most unlikely that Saddam Hussein will be able to make any progress on the development of nuclear weapons while the blockade continues.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Not wholly unlikely.

Mr. Heath: Yes, I accept that it is wholly unlikely that Saddam Hussein can possibly develop his nuclear weapons.

What about our forces in the Gulf? In the words of the American commander, "If it is a question of death or sunbathing in the sun, I would rather go sunbathing in the sun." Our forces are quite capable of coping. What is unforgivable is to say that we must go to war because we

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are impatient. If we as a country did that—*[Interruption.]* We did not go to war with Hitler because we were impatient.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): The same argument was used on 3 September by people in the House.

Mr. Heath: If we were to go to war because we were impatient, our forces could say, "We are being sacrificed because you are too impatient to pursue the alternative course." That is the real challenge facing us. For this period, we should use all our skill to continue to carry out sanctions in an endeavour to bring about a change in President Saddam Hussein's attitude. That is not impossible. He once made a most dramatic change that nobody expected; he welcomed Iran back, gave its people everything they had lost, and was friends with them.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The right hon. Gentleman has met Saddam Hussein. When he did so, did he ask him to withdraw from Kuwait? If so, what response did he get?

Mr. Heath: This answer should command a large fee. Briefly, I said to him, "The United Nations' resolution states that you must withdraw from Kuwait, and you must do so. If you withdraw from Kuwait, there is nothing left for the British and Americans to do but to go home." [HON. MEMBERS: "What did he say?"] He said, "If I withdraw from Kuwait, what assurance will you give me that, instead of going home, the British and Americans will not go into Kuwait and attack me from there?" Since my visit, the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and President Bush have given an undertaking that that will not happen, but I believe that more is necessary. I believe that the Arab League must put a buffer round to separate Kuwait from the other countries and Iraq. That will be the Arab League's duty.

President Hussein said to me, "You are putting forward hypothetical situations." I said, "Yes, because I want to find out your response to each hypothetical situation." I suggested a number of other such situations to him, emphasising all the time that the United Nations' resolution meant that he should withdraw. Of course, we all know that problems exist between the two countries and have done for a long time. The resolution states that they should be resolved. A peacekeeping force could then be sent in to ensure that the peace remained.

I believe that our duty at present is to persist with sanctions and to do the utmost possible to ensure that they are kept by everyone involved and to see whether there is a sudden change in President Saddam's attitude.

Alternatively, President Saddam may find himself gradually brought to a position where he has no alternative but to withdraw from Kuwait.

5.8 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): When I rose to speak on 6 September following the speech of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members please leave quietly?

Mr. Ashdown: I recall that I bemoaned my fate of always following the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. On that occasion I found myself agreeing with a large proportion of what he said. Today I fear that for reasons which I shall explain I shall have to part company with him on major portions of his speech.

We are dealing with a literally terrifying issue. Democracies go through agony when considering whether or not to embark on war and use force, and it is right and proper that they should go through that agony. Decent people throughout Britain will have come to conclusions different from mine and those of other hon. Members for perfectly proper, right and sincere reasons. Therefore, I echo the Prime Minister's comments at the start of his speech when he said that he hoped that the debate would not be conducted in a partisan spirit, but would address a terrifying, moral and practical problem in a rational manner, understanding the views of different people who had reached different conclusions.

All the conclusions that each of us in our separate ways will have reached will be based on judgments, not truths. It is at the very heart of the democratic process that those judgments should be out in the open and open to question. I should like to explain my position and that of my party and how we rationally approach the answers to four questions.

First, is it possible at this midnight hour to reach peace?

Mr. Ron Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman must forgive me. I intend to make progress and I shall not give way at this point.

Secondly, if we fail to find peace, will it be necessary to use force? Thirdly, if we use force, can we, as the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup suggested, wait a little longer to ensure that sanctions are tested through? Lastly, if we have to use force, what should be the aims of the war in which we would then be involved, what should be the limitations on it and what should we hope that its outcome will be?

Can we, as we teeter on the last millimetres at the edge of this terrible decision, still reach peace? All hon. Members, whatever their hopes, judgments or wishes, and whatever line they want to pursue——

Mr. Ron Brown: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ashdown: The hon. Gentleman must recognise that I am not his right hon. Friend and that I have not the slightest intention of giving way.

We must all recognise that we must be deeply pessimistic about the possibility of achieving peace at this last moment. I know that the Prime Minister agrees that it must be our aim, consistent with the terms of the UN resolution, to search for and to explore any last realistic, constructive approach to peace that remains open to us. That is what I have said that the Prime Minister must do. I think that he has underestimated the French initiative. I agree with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup that that initiative does not dilute or undermine the terms of the UN resolution. I believe that it is on all fours with the resolution. However, I welcome the Prime Minister's statement that there will be at least one final appeal from the Security Council.

I hope that the Prime Minister agrees that if today is not a deadline for the start of war, by that definition it also cannot be a deadline for stopping talks. If there are further lines to pursue, they should be pursued, although not as delaying tactics. Only constructive lines must be pursued. In these difficult times we shall of course support our troops on the field if the terrible decision has to be taken, but I must point out that the French initiative requires a timetable for withdrawal, the immediate withdrawal of large numbers of troops and a UN peacekeeping force to monitor and oversee that withdrawal.

There is also the nasty issue of linkage, and I share the Prime Minister's determination that we should not put ourselves in the position in which we reward Saddam Hussein. The French resolution stipulates the calling of a peace conference at an appropriate time, which is already the policy of the United Kingdom Government. It is the declared policy of our Government, and we support it, that there should be a middle east conference to deal with these matters. I must caution the Prime Minister in the gentlest possible terms not to get caught by the following perverse paradox: the moment the first shot is fired or the first bomb is dropped in a war, a middle east peace conference becomes inevitable. Would it not be illogical to go to war on an issue that becomes inevitable the moment we do so? There must be questions about linkage, but we can surely find the wit and the way to portray a conference not as a concession to Saddam Hussein but as a means of resolving the problem of the Palestinians which Hussein's occupation of Kuwait is preventing from happening. In that way Hussein becomes the bulwark to the resolution of the Palestinian problem, not the instrument to which the benighted Palestinians look for a resolution to their problem.

I anticipate that if the French initiative were put to Iraq it would be rejected by Iraq, but if the Prime Minister were seen to be pursuing last steps towards peace without diluting the United Nations resolutions he would take away Saddam Hussein's capacity to play the Palestinian card. I can see no disadvantage in that course of action.

Every right hon. and hon. Member except for a few Labour Members can see clearly that there can be no dilution of the terms of the United Nations resolutions without affecting the authority of the United Nations and undermining the primacy of international law. If, therefore, every last desperate effort at peace having failed, we have to use force, then we must be prepared to use it. It would be a good enough reason to use force to free Kuwait from the misery, oppressions, terror and torture that the Prime Minister described. It might be a good enough reason to consider the use of force to stop the further aggrandisement of Saddam Hussein. Iraq will be armed in two years' time with nuclear weapons which we have no doubt that Saddam Hussein will use once he has them. The use of force for that reason might, therefore, prevent greater conflagrations in future. But these are not the primary reasons for being prepared to use force now. The prime reason was exactly as the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition expressed it: if we do not now back international law and take every action necessary to uphold the authority of the United Nations, we shall have a broken-backed United Nations——

Mr. Skinner: Its authority must be upheld everywhere.

Mr. Ashdown: That is true. I have sometimes attempted to ask the hon. Gentleman how he will be able to complain about a Panama or a Grenada in future if on this occasion we do not stand up for Kuwait——

Mr. Cryer: The United Nations resolutions on such countries have not always been complied with in the past.

Mr. Ashdown: That is a departure that we can now make—but only if we back the United Nations on this occasion. I warn hon. Members who oppose my view to beware. If we do not now back the United Nations and international law, we shall have a broken-backed United Nations at the very moment when the world needs a strong one and when we shall have to face——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham) *rose*——

Mr. Cryer *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: We shall have a broken-backed United Nations at the very moment when international gangsters armed with nuclear weapons confront the world—because we failed to control the proliferation of those weapons. That is the moment when we shall need a counterbalance to a world in which there will be only one super-power——

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the leader of the Liberal party tell the whole story about the United Nations, and about how, when the United States proposed a vote on a resolution to set the date of 15 January, America was so far behind with its subscriptions that it crawled in to pay them before the vote was held—and told Egypt that the United States would bail it out with $3·5 billion?

Mr. Ashdown: Sometimes I despair. Why do the hon. Gentleman and others who take a similar line always seek explanations in the past instead of facing up to the problems that confront us now? However we arrived at this situation, and whatever the ingredients that went into it, the authority of the United Nations is at stake and we must back that authority and support the rule of international law.

Mr. Ron Brown *rose*——

Mr. Ashdown: I am keen to allow other hon. Members to speak——

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. Will the hon. Gentleman resume his seat?

Mr. Brown *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. Mr. Ashdown has the floor.

Mr. Ashdown: The upshot is that our troops are not in the Gulf to uphold British or western influence. We could be said to have created the monster that is Saddam Hussein, with whom we are now trying to cope, but that does not lead me to the conclusion that the world should pay the price of war because of our past follies in the middle east. Nor are British troops in the field in the middle east to assure our oil supply. Our gluttonous dependence on oil and our failure to learn the lessons of the 1970s does not lead me to believe that we should risk a war on that basis alone. Our troops are there as the

[Mr. Ashdown]

instruments of international will, the upholders of international law and the preservers of the authority of the United Nations.

Mr. Franks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashdown: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, several hon. Members have sought to intervene and I should like to make some progress.

I therefore come to whether, if we have to contemplate the use of force, we can give sanctions more time. I wish that I could tell the House that the answer to that question in my view is yes. When I spoke on 6 September I said that I hoped that sanctions would be given sufficient time. I said that they needed sufficient time to be judged, but we must judge the present situation according to what is happening, not what our hopes were.

The question is best answered by seeking to obtain answers to two questions. First, would the prolongation of sanctions have an effect on the Iraqi people? The answer would no doubt be that in due course it might. It probably would, but that is not the key question. The question to be answered is not whether it would have an effect on the Iraqi people but whether it would have any effect on the will of Saddam Hussein. Although I wish that sanctions had worked, and I longed for them to work, I do not believe that one can make a judgment which leads one to answer yes to that question without suspending rational judgment in favour of pious hope, and I do not believe that we should be considering this matter on the basis of pious hopes.

What would happen if we were to prolong sanctions, having exhausted every last avenue for peace? In the meantime, Saddam Hussein would strengthen immensely his defences in Kuwait. There are those who argue that his military capacity would be diminished, but that is counterbalanced by far by the preparations that he would be able to make to resist any retaking of Kuwait in the name of the United Nations—by far. In so doing we would raise the cost that has to be paid in the lives of our troops in achieving success.

In the intervening months, Saddam Hussein would be able massively to increase—quantitatively and perhaps also qualitatively—his access to and capacity for delivering weapons of mass destruction. Again, the price that we would have to pay for success if we wanted to use force then would be higher in the lives of our troops.

In the intervening time, although the Leader of the Opposition seems to wish to ignore it, there would be some risk to the cohesion of the international coalition. It may well be that if we waited until September—incidentally, that worry comes not from the western powers but from the Arab powers who have serious problems with the maintenance of the stand of the international coalition—or October or November, the option of force would not be open to us.

The hard and difficult judgment that we must now make is this. A prolongation of sanctions is unlikely to be successful in changing the will of Saddam Hussein. If it were to happen, however, it would be almost certain to raise the cost that must be paid for success in terms of the lives of our troops and may even increase the chances of failure and, with that, the failure of the authority of the United Nations.

Gloomily, I have to reach this conclusion. If at the end of the day, all avenues to peace having been exhausted, we have to grasp this terrible nettle, it would be better that we grasped it when we had to rather than to delay and pay a higher price later.

I now address my remarks briefly to the question of aims, constraints and objectives. I hope that the Government will, in clearer terms than I have heard so far from the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Defence or the Foreign Secretary, announce what the aims of any action would be. It is important that if we go into this terrible action we do so clear about our objectives. It would be a catastrophe to allow a war which invented its own aims as it rolled along. We must now state what our aims will be. That means that the Prime Minister should confirm—perhaps the Foreign Secretary will do so when he replies—that the aims of our operation as an instrument of the will of international law do not extend further than the terms of the UN resolutions, that they are consistent with those and do not go further.

Secondly, I greatly welcome the Prime Minister's statement on the use of nuclear and chemical weapons in response. We do not need to use them. We have sufficient conventional forces to deter effectively or to respond effectively without their use. But the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary must realise that the Liberal Democratic party could not countenance and would not support the use of nuclear or chemical weapons.

Mr. Cryer: Nor does the United Nations.

Mr. Ashdown: Nor, indeed, as the hon. Gentleman says, does the United Nations.

Therefore, the constraints that we use must be proportional to the task. The aim has to be consistent with the UN resolutions—the freedom of Kuwait, not the acquisition of Iraqi territory. We all recognise that action within Iraq against its air force and chemical capacity may be part of the operation in Kuwait, but it should not include the acquisition of Iraqi territory.

If we are in the Gulf now as the instrument of international will, supporting the authority of the United Nations, the United Nations has a part to play in that operation. It is obvious that the conduct of the war must lie with those nations which have troops at risk in the field. The United Nations should now be responsible for the construction of any peace which follows. That peace cannot be on the basis of a Versailles conference where those with forces in the field carve up the territory which may or may not have resulted. It must be a peace vested in the United Nations, constructed in the United Nations and based on a broad middle east peace conference, arranged for and carried through under United Nations auspices.

The House today debates a literally terrifying decision. We in the Liberal Democratic party hope that the Government will pursue every last realistic avenue for peace. But if, as regrettably seems likely, peace fails, we believe that action must be taken to uphold international law. In voting with the Government today, we are not only giving that support to which our troops in the field are entitled; we are also expressing our view that it is only by upholding international law and backing the authority of the United Nations that the long-term peace of the world can be assured.

5.27 pm

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): After the very fine speech by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and many of the points, but not all, so excellently and eloquently made by the Leader of the Opposition, and the forceful and fine speech made by the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), I wish to add only a few points and to detain the House for a minimum of time in doing so.

First, as the hours tick away and the enabling hour for United Nations approval of the use of force approaches, we should have the most profound respect for those who recoil from the very idea of extended force and war, particularly those who have themselves been involved in the great wars of the past and who understand better than some of us the sheer terror, hell, cruelty and indiscrimination of the war process as it continues.

But to those people, whose instincts one completely respects, we have to say that, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister reminded the House, we already have war in the Gulf. That war began in the early hours of 2 August when the tanks of Iraq rumbled into Kuwait and when people began to die, and have continued to die ever since. There has been a war, and the issue before us now, which has gradually unfolded with terrifying clarity, is how we check Saddam Hussein, this warmonger, with his intention of evil aggression clearly announced, from expanding that aggression and from strengthening his weapons to control it further; how we check that evil so that a greater evil does not result. When people say that war is evil, we can only agree—but sometimes the smaller evil must be faced to halt the larger evil. That point is at the centre of the immensely difficult decision that must be made.

If Saddam Hussein will not move towards peace, even in these last hours, and if he is not checked, he will continue to use the force that he has shown, and is showing hour by hour—in the form of terror, street executions, man hunts and other atrocities. That is surely an easy lesson for those of us in Britain to understand. Without drawing too much on historical analogies, which can be overworked, it must be embedded in our folk memory that if such people are not checked at an early stage, there is always a much higher price to pay later in bloodshed, misery and terror. That is something which many people in Britain who do not understand the higher complexities and the interweaving of the finer arguments can understand. It is an argument which can easily be grasped by people who remember, or whose parents remember, the hostilities of the past.

Are sanctions failing, or could we somehow maintain them and eventually see Iraq's war effort wither and Saddam Hussein withdraw from Kuwait? There is little evidence of that. Instead, one sees every sign that the effects of the sanctions have long since peaked, and that, like the old fishing net, gaps are developing even in the oil trading system—for there is evidence that trading with Iraq in oil is still taking place on a small scale. Certainly the sinister trade in the international arms market continues. In a thousand other ways, Iraq is at the centre —as it has been throughout history—of a gigantic trading network which cannot indefinitely be bottled up, and which shows every sign of redeveloping.

Of course, sanctions have proved uncomfortable for Iraq, and they will continue to do so—but they will not do the trick. They will not lift Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. They will not even create the starvation among the mass of the Iraqi people that would compel Saddam Hussein to think again, for the very good reasons that living standards in Iraq are appallingly low anyway, and that the potential for expanding its food production is considerable and is now being exploited. Although one prayed that sanctions would do the job, there is no evidence that they will achieve their purpose—certainly not in a foreseeable time frame, and perhaps not for years ahead.

Even if one could foresee the day, a year or two ahead, when Saddam Hussein declares, "We have had enough of being the pariah of the world", where would we be? By then, Iraq would have developed a nuclear capacity. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) suggested that the Iraqis do not have such a capacity now, though other reports imply that they are capable of manufacturing a rather crude nuclear weapon. Nevertheless, it would probably be bigger than anything dropped on Hiroshima, even if too big to carry under the wing of an aircraft. The Iraqis already have the mechanism for creating some kind of nuclear detonation—and that would certainly still be the case in two years' time, sanctions or no sanctions.

As much as one yearns to go with those who argue that we should wait for sanctions to work, the truth is that the clock is ticking the other way, and the longer that Saddam Hussein is allowed to get away with his actions, the deeper he will dig into Kuwait, and the more likely it is that he will successfully defy the collective security of the world.

Collective security is the light which failed at the League of Nations. It was the light which many in the Labour party, and in many other parties also, tried to reignite, and which they believed passionately would somehow secure peace. Again and again it was discredited. Speeches were made, rhetoric was tried, and sanctions were implemented —but they all failed in the inter-war years. After years of the United Nations being a feeble, divided force because of third world arguments, non-alignment, the hostility of the communists against the capitalists and the lining up against anything that the Americans supported, we now begin to see it emerging as an effective force, bringing together all the great nations, and the smaller ones, of the planet. It is uniting the Americans, Europeans, Asians, Chinese—and even the Soviet Union in its travail, as it disintegrates. They and many other countries are working together, having recognised the need to display collective security in such a way that their representations are seen as something more than a tap on the wrist or a rap across the knuckles.

In that situation, one must surely have the support of all political parties and their leaders—as we have in this instance—in emphasising the need for collective security particularly at this time, at the start of the post-cold war period and the beginning of a new era, when there really is a chance, for the first time almost in living memory, for collective security to be effectively organised. That is not to say that such an arrangement can bring peace to the middle east. As the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) rightly said the other day, the middle east is inherently unstable and always will be. Nevertheless, we ought to be able to create some envelope framework or order by which the instability of that boiling stew can be contained and not spill out to create more hideous tragedies and global instability.

I acknowledge the point made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that the tone of the French initiative

[Mr. David Howell]

goes beyond the substance of the United Nations resolutions. However, we should not be too harsh on the French. Their president is himself under some political pressure, and he is in a delicate situation in having to commit French troops to fighting. President Mitterrand must demonstrate that he is reaching his decision independently—in a French way that may sometimes madden us, but it is a trait that the world recognises. I may not agree entirely with the French, but I understand why they feel that they must go the final mile, or kilometre, in proving beyond doubt to the French people that there is no further room for diplomacy.

Ms. Gordon: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of the thoroughgoing, two-and-a-half-day debate in the American Congress, during which members of the House of Representatives and of the Senate reflected the unease felt by a large number of the American people that sanctions have not been properly tried. Iraq has only one major export—its oil—and needs to import about two thirds of its food requirements. Even Iraqi dinar are printed in this country. If we turn our minds to devising constructive ways of putting pressure on Iraq——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is meant to be making an intervention, not a speech. I ask her to make her point.

Ms. Gordon: If we can devise better ways of applying pressure rather than entering into a dreadful bloodbath, we shall save bloodshed, the break-up of families and everything else that war brings—and I have lived through a war, and know what one is like.

Mr. Howell: No one doubts that sanctions are having an impact and are proving irritating, frustrating and difficult for Iraq. Nevertheless, they are not doing the trick. The international oil market is fairly indiscriminate and even now it is being fed by Iraqi oil. Not every sanction is working in the way that it should or in the way that we hoped that it would. The effectiveness of sanctions eventually wears out and I fear that the system is not on our side.

I repeat that we should not be too harsh on the French. As to their proposals for a middle east conference and linkage, I recoil from the linkage concept as it somehow implies that the Iraqis' attack on Kuwait is of the same order as the Israelis' occupation of the west bank. Although there may be injustices in both, they did not arise under the same conditions and they should not be compared.

Mr. Heath: Given that both pipelines from Iraq have been cut, there is a blockade of all shipping, and no roads are available to the Iraqis, can my right hon. Friend explain how Iraq is still able to export its oil? Should not my right hon. Friend inform the authorities?

Mr. Howell: Certainly. I am doing so now and I have done so already. Road facilities for moving oil still exist. I must inform my right hon. Friend—I shall discuss this with him later if he wishes—that people in the oil market tell us that Iraqi oil is somehow seeping into the system. Because of the sanctions arrangements, it should not, but links exist. I do not know whether it goes through neighbouring countries or on ships of other nationalities, but there is evidence that some revenue from oil is passing to Iraq.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: No, I must move on as it is only fair to other hon. Members.

I recoil from the question of linkage and there is too much of it in the French proposal. In due course there will be some sort of conference to address the need for security arrangements in the Gulf and the Arab-Israeli issue with more vigour. That will have to come, but there is no question of its coming to order, in response to some agreement made with Saddam Hussein. That conference will begin to make sense only if it is well prepared and if Israel is in a different mood from the mood that it was in when it was considering its security in April and nearly met the PLO in Cairo, but backed out at the last minute.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Howell: No, I shall press on.

I do not think that the fact that the French have raised linkage at this last moment should count too much against them. It is worth trying anything to get the message through. However, the truth of the matter is that Saddam Hussein probably does not need a message. Perhaps he needs an excuse or a peg, but that opportunity has been open to him all along. It has been open since 2 August and it is still open now. He could withdraw from Kuwait and bring about peace from the moment that he did so and from the moment that he complied with the resolutions.

One understands all the eloquence which has been directed against war, but it should be addressed to that man in his cocoon, with his inner voices and his Messianic stance, who seems determined, and probably was determined from the start, to provoke a war and to bring the most fearful retribution upon himself, his country and his people. That is what he is going to do unless, in the next few hours, he takes a step to avoid it. We should sombrely and grimly face that fact if the further safety of nations both large and small is to be assured.

5.42 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I wish to confine my remarks to the question of sanctions, especially in the light of what the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said at the end of his speech, when he stressed that sanctions need to be kept at the centre of our debate. I believe that that is absolutely right. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) put that issue in its proper context. One of the main purposes of our debate should be to get answers from the Government, which we have certainly not had yet. What is the Government's verdict? When did they make the decision? How does that tie up with the deadline? I do not believe that the Government or their allies have fully examined the effects and the possibilities of sanctions. In the face of such peril for the world, it is outrageous that the Government have not given us a much fuller account of that aspect of the matter. I hope that they will reply to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and to the remarks that he made at the end of his speech.

Since our previous debate on this subject the options have closed. Since that time almost all the talk outside the House, and some of it on this side of the House, has been to the effect that the military option is the only one left. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) has written about the reality of the military option, if we are forced to it. The House should face that reality and should realise that we are facing more terrifying consequences than those of any brief military action—which is the likely outcome that has been described.

For those reasons, and because the military option has always been viewed in that fashion, it was necessary to explore sanctions diligently, persistently and with a determination to carry them through to the end. I do not believe that our Government or any other Government can claim that they have carried out that obligation. The earlier votes at the United Nations would not have been secured, in my view, if provision had not been made for sanctions as the first major step to try to secure a settlement of the dispute.

Some of the accounts today have been extraordinary. We heard the spokesman for the Liberal party saying that if we continued sanctions—perhaps for another five months until the autumn, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East suggested—Saddam Hussein would have a better chance of improving his economic and military situation than the forces assembled against him would have. That seems an astonishing proposition to me. How could it be that the great powers, with considerable armies, the means of supporting them and all those resources, could be gravely weakened if another five or six months were allowed to pass and that Saddam Hussein would be able to strengthen his position? I do not believe that that is a sensible proposition. Indeed, I should have thought that the balance would have been the other way around. In any case, surely a choice between peace and war should not be based on such an absurd suggestion.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): To be fair to my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), he was talking specifically about chemical weapons and the fact that Saddam Hussein is pretty near to creating some sort of nuclear device.

Mr. Foot: The hon. Gentleman may not have had the advantage of doing so, but I heard the right hon. Member's speech and he was talking about the whole issue. I do not believe that there is much difference between any hon. Members who consider what may be the consequences of a terrible war, if they do it faithfully and honestly, but some people have a rather subdued idea of the consequences which could soon spread from such a war.

For example, if there is a war the Palestinians will be in the worst position. Let us suppose that they joined in the war and rebelled—no doubt they would claim that they were doing it in support of their cause. The ensuing suppression would be horrific because the Israeli Government would feel that their existence was at stake. We should take into account the fate that the Palestinians might have to face, although it does not seem to worry Saddam very much. I believe that the leader of some of the Palestinians, Yasser Arafat, made a grave error by taking the view of the war that he has taken, but that does not alter the fact that we have responsibilities towards the Palestinians and what might happen to them. There are other places in the middle east—although none where the situation is quite so delicate as in Palestine—where this explosion could cause such huge injustices and horrors. We should think not twice, but four, five or more times to try to find a different way out.

Every speaker today and in previous debates has said that there may come a point when there is no other possibility of getting Hussein out of Kuwait than the use of force. However, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and I believe that that point has not yet been reached and the world does not believe that that point has been reached.

Great peace demonstrations have taken place throughout Europe—here in London, in Paris and in Germany, for instance. The demonstrators do not support what Saddam has done in Kuwait, and, although some were pacifists—to whom all honour should be given for having expressed their views—many were simply saying that the sanctions alternative was a much more civilised, intelligent way of trying to settle the dispute, and one that had not yet been sufficiently explored and implemented. If the Government turned their back on such a volume of opinion, they would do a disservice not only to the cause but to our service men, and to all those who must bear the heaviest burdens.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East has taken every opportunity to make that case to the House very strongly and I hope that he will have a chance to underline it this evening. Anyone who reads what he has said about both the scale of possible events in the middle east and the possibility of effective sanctions will recognise that we cannot simply accept the authority of the Government's statement that enough has already been said on the subject.

I was astonished at the insolence of this morning's *Times* leader about sanctions. That newspaper should be especially careful about expressing views on appeasement, how to deal with dictators and other such abstruse questions. According to the *The Times*,

> "Yet congressmen and senators could still find reason for backing off"—

from resorting to war, that is—

> "not least the notorious appeaser's remedy of 'giving sanctions longer to work.'"

One would have thought that the hand of a *Times* leader writer would wither before he dared to write such words.

When sanctions were applied against Italy before the last war and someone suggested that they should be given a little longer to work, it was a previous Prime Minister, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, who said that that was midsummer madness. But, if we had made sanctions work properly then, we might have been able to stop Fascism in Spain, Austria and elsewhere. We could have stopped the second world war by taking effective collective action, starting with economic sanctions and taking further action if they did not succeed. The Conservative Government of the day, however, called off the sanctions before they had had a chance to injure Mussolini at all. In fact, I believe that we supplied Mussolini with even more arms than we have given Saddam Hussein.

I hope that the House will pay proper attention to the alternatives, not merely this evening but in future debates. None of us ever accepted the deadline as the time when it was permissible to go to war. Although Saddam Hussein has shown his intransigence at every opportunity, which has helped to close some of the options, the decision of Her

[Mr. Foot]

Majesty's Government appears to have closed others. I believe that today's debate can force the Government to reconsider all those questions.

I trust—as, I think, do most other hon. Members who have spoken—that a fresh discussion will be held in the United Nations Security Council to discuss President Mitterrand's latest proposals. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) was very patronising about the French President, but he knows a little about such matters. Is it not possible that his primary wish is to secure a peace —on the basis of collective security, which he, like many Opposition Members, has supported for many years? There will be no desertion of that principle, but we believe that it can best be applied by means of sanctions, at least in the first instance. The time has not yet come to abandon that option and resort to methods that would have incalculable consequences for the middle east and, indeed, the world as a whole.

That would not weaken the United Nations; it would strengthen it. If the world goes to war on the basis of the propositions now being advanced, the chances of maintaining the coalition will be seriously damaged, for a variety of reasons that I—among others—have already mentioned, especially the Palestinian question. I do not want that to happen; I want the coalition to remain strong.

If the Government have the determination to go ahead with a more intelligent policy than war, I believe that we can hold that coalition together for longer and make it more effective still. The House should use this opportunity to give the Government new instructions.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, I must remind the House that from 6 pm speeches will be limited to 10 minutes.

5.56 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has spoken with his customary eloquence and passion, even when propounding arguments with which many of us profoundly disagree and when attempting, in a charmingly deceptive way, to rewrite history. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not follow his speech. I wish to be brief, and I do not want to talk about the principles involved in the circumstances in which we find ourselves today; I want to discuss some of the practical consequences, which I hope will prove helpful.

I had the good fortune to visit the Gulf last month with most of the members of the Select Committee on Defence, together with the Opposition defence spokesmen—the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell)—and four distinguished Members of the other place. It was a very successful, interesting and stimulating visit. Having seen troops from all three services—the Royal Air Force in Bahrain, the Navy on HMS London and 7 Armoured Brigade in the desert—we were supremely impressed with the high morale, the efficiency with which the complicated operation to send them all out there had been conducted, the equipment with which they had been provided and their general preparedness for a task which none of them wants to do, but which all are prepared to do if that is required. That was the most moving impression that I received: every soldier, sailor and airman to whom I spoke hoped that we would find a way to avoid war, but every one of them was entirely prepared to do his duty if war should come about.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The hon. Gentleman said that the service people out there expressed the hope that politicians at home would try to find a solution which would avoid war, but have not the British Government simply followed the American line that negotiations are not allowed even though United Nations resolution 660 refers to them specifically?

Mr. Mates: No, that is not true. I regret having given way to the hon. Gentleman; I was trying to be courteous.

Another impressive feature was the level of co-operation with the United States command structure. Loose talk from the ignorant about being lapdogs of the American commanders could not be further from the truth; if it were true, I should be as concerned about it as anyone else. We were able to discuss with the commander, General de la Billière, whom I have known for 25 years, the arrangements that he has been able to make with General Schwarzkopf and with which he is totally satisfied. It was impressive to see the level of co-operation between the two staffs in all the services. As we went around the air control operations centre, we saw members of the Royal Air Force at every third or fourth desk working side by side as a team with their American colleagues, not in any form of subservience but exchanging expertise, experience and advice, which can bring nothing but benefit to a joint operation should it have to come about.

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mates: I will not give way as I am now restricted to 10 minutes. I should dearly love to give way if I had the time, but I hope that the hon. Lady will forgive me.

A question has been raised by the doubters about the efficiency and effectiveness of our equipment. We were able to satisfy ourselves that our forces have everything that they want. The tanks that were so badly maligned are working very well—better than in Germany—and that is largely because they are being used. It is because we have not been able to get them out and manoeuvre them that they have had such problems. Aircraft down-time was much less after more flying than our pilots had found in Germany or the United Kingdom, and the atmosphere in terms of equipment and readiness to do the job was thoroughly positive and commendable.

Enough of that, however. I want to talk about what might occur should war start, not that I want that, as it is better to think about it now than if hostilities commence. I wish to deal with the media and censorship. Already we are hearing cries from certain sectors of the media that they must be allowed to say, do, show and write what they like, but that must not be because sometimes by doing that they may make our service men's cause harder. Certainly, the truth must be told and it must be no part of any censorship to deny to the British people the truth of what is happening, but there is always censorship in war because there is always information which, if it were released to the enemy, would be of help to them and would assist them in countering what we are doing in a better way than would otherwise have been the case.

That raises a difficulty which, in my experience, is totally new. We have never conducted a war in which the

media have had full access to both sides. That is the first problem. There will be media in Baghdad as well as in the Gulf. Instant communications will make censorship extremely difficult and will throw an even greater responsibility on the media not to say or do anything which might harm our cause. That point was brought home to me vividly at a press conference in the desert at 7 Armoured Brigade headquarters. The assembled media were there and several of us gave interviews. I asked one of the journalists when the interview I had given would get home. He said, "It's gone." It went instantly. That is totally new. There are telephones out there and if one of our tank commanders could afford to buy it and pay the bill he could have a telephone in his tank and dial home. The reporters are doing just that, which gives their responsibility an entirely new dimension. The media must not say or do anything either consciously, which I am sure that they would not do, or unconsciously which would give an enemy any help. That is a new responsibility and I hope that the Ministry of Defence is addressing it, although with what certainly it can control such things I do not know. I hope that those from the media who are listening will take into account that very new and critically important aspect in terms of what needs to be hidden as well as what needs to be told.

Mr. Heath: I agree with much of what my hon. Friend says, but he will be aware that the BBC and ITN are already questioning heavily the regulations that have been made. The American press will print everything and American television will cover everything, as they did in Vietnam every moment of the day and night. If the information is covered in the American press, it will be impossible to stop it being covered in our press and media in the same way.

Mr. Mates: I hope that my right hon. Friend is wrong and that it will not be impossible. If there is one area in which it is absolutely crucial that the media exercise self-restraint, it is on the question of casualties. The worst thing in the world would be for the wives and families of our service men to see or hear from the newspapers or media that their loved ones have been hurt or killed. That is a responsibility that the services take seriously. They want to ensure that such information is made available in a compassionate and helpful way. It was a major cause of difficulty in the Falklands war, where there was some control, but because it involved largely naval casualties and one knows who is on a ship if it is hit, it was a different problem from that facing the Army and Air Force. Nevertheless, there is a real responsibility to ensure, so far as is humanly possible, that the media do not divulge that sort of information before the proper authorities in this country have been able to take the action that they will be planning with the greatest care to carry out in the most humane way possible.

Finally, the immediacy of communication from here to there has never happened before. Members of the services can be listening to this debate if it is put out on the World Service at this moment. Members of tank crews and air crew underneath the wing of their aeroplanes waiting to fight a sortie can hear the debate. They can hear the comments and the criticisms. That puts extra responsibility on all of us, should hostilities come about, to say nothing which could be interpreted as undermining our total determination to see the enterprise through if it starts. It puts a greater responsibility on politicians, media figures and public figures generally to restrain themselves should hostilities begin. By all means, let us have the post-mortems afterwards, and the criticisms made with hindsight when peace has been restored, but not when our soldiers are there prepared to die and perhaps dying. They should not hear one word of criticism from us which, carelessly uttered, can be delivered instantly to them and undermine the effort that we are making for them.

6.7 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): This is the third time in my nearly 40 years in the House when I have watched a great nation sleep-walking to disaster with its eyes open and its mind closed. The first occasion was Suez in 1956, the second was the long tragedy of the United States in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, and I fear that on this occasion Britain and the United States are sleep-walking together in the Gulf. In all three cases the central problem has been the inability of Governments to accept the facts about the consequences of their actions that have been put to them by their own advisers, allied with a quite stupefying lack of proportion.

Britain embarked on the Suez enterprise in 1956 when eastern Europe was in turmoil and we knew that the Soviet Union was having to decide whether to intervene in Hungary. The United States intervened in Vietnam in the belief that if it did not win that war, all the dominoes in the world would fall. It lost the war and the only domino that fell was a communist domino in Cambodia. In this case we are contemplating war when 15 million Africans are threatened with death by famine and we know that we will not have the money to support them if we engage in a war.

We know that free trade between the developed countries of the world is threatened by the collapse of the GATT talks. Nobody has time to worry about that because of the imminent war, although Britain and the United States are engaged in a recession. We see eastern Europe's attempt to restore democracy crippled by a tripling of oil prices brought about by the Soviet Union, followed by the doubling of oil prices caused by the Gulf crisis and a further doubling or tripling, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Monetary Fund, if there is war in the Gulf. Finally, we see the Soviet leaders trying to take decisions of historic importance on how to deal with revolt among their nationalities at a moment when those in the west who might influence their choice are so anxious to retain Soviet support for war in the Gulf that they are refusing to say what they really think. I accept what the Foreign Secretary said about that, but what action will follow his rude words we have yet to discover.

Against that background, it is surely madness to embark on war if any alternative is available. Is war necessary to achieve the objectives agreed by the United Nations resolution that was passed a month or so ago? We are assured by the head of the CIA, no less, that it is not. He told the United States Congress in great detail that sanctions were already having a major effect on the civilian economy of Iraq and that within three to nine months they would have a major effect in crippling Iraq's military capability.

When Mr. Cheney, the Defence Secretary, was faced with those statements and his own statements to the same effect, made even as recently as last December, he

[Mr. Denis Healey]

preferred to use other arguments for not persisting with sanctions. The first was that we cannot any longer allow the Kuwaitis to be submitted to the brutality of the occupying forces. So far, 2,000 Kuwaitis have been killed, but, as I pointed out to the Prime Minister earlier today, the *Financial Times* this morning reports a senior member of the exiled Kuwaiti ruling family—which, incidentally, left behind 275 heavy tanks and 480 armoured vehicles for the Iraqis to take over and use against us, because it was not warned of the imminent attack, of which the CIA had warned the President two days earlier—as saying:

"We have already lost a lot of our infrastructure. So we really don't have a lot to lose. I don't want it to be flattened, but, if the flattening of Kuwait is the liberation of Kuwait, I would have that."

Let us have no more crocodile tears about the fate of the Kuwaiti people. We undoubtedly feel deeply for them, but a war will subject them to far worse suffering than they have yet endured under Saddam Hussein.

We were told by Mr. Cheney that if we continue with sanctions the coalition will fall apart. All the evidence of the past few days is that if we embark on war the coalition may fall apart. We have, already, major differences between the United States and Britain on the one hand and all the European members of the coalition on the other, which is symbolised by Britain's support of America's refusal to support Mitterrand's proposals for last-minute negotiations, although they are already supported by Germany, Italy, Spain and, we now hear, the Soviet Union.

We are told that our military power is at its peak, but we were told by the American generals that it would not be at its peak for at least another month. We still have to get agreement among the members of the coalition on the command and control of a war. When I raised this question with the Secretary of State for Defence in a recent debate, he said that it was quite improper for me to raise it. I tell the Foreign Secretary, who has some experience of the peace-time Army, that to go into a war with six large contingents, of which only two are under agreed command structure, and in which the French, Saudis, and Syrians are operating the same weapons as the Iraqi opponent, is to invite mutual catastrophe on a devastating scale. In Vietnam, the Americans lost 10,000 of their 65,000 casualties through such a muck-up at the hands of their own forces.

When I consider that we are contemplating a war without formal agreement that the Saudis and the Muslim contingents will join in, I feel very much like the German admiral who, when the multilateral force was explained to him some time ago, replied, "I would rather swim." This is a serious matter because if we go to war without that sorted out, we shall risk unnecessary mutual slaughter of the members of the coalition.

Although we cannot be certain, the war will probably involve an appalling loss of life—we have been told so by the military concerned—economic disaster and political instability in the middle east for at least a generation. It may also have a long-term effect on the willingness of the United States to continue accepting international responsibilities. We are already faced with attacks from all sides in Congress about the unwillingness of the Europeans and Japanese to share the burden. If the war has the consequences which I fear, and which were predicted by many people in congressional hearings in the United States, we could find America withdrawing and Britain being beached offshore on the edge of Europe, having lost its relationship with the Europeans, on which we thought the Foreign Secretary set so much store.

I hope, at this last moment, that the Government will change their mind about the French initiative and will support the view taken by all our European partners, except the Danes, and by the European members of the coalition. If we are committed to war, we shall do everything to support our troops. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and I fought with our troops, although we regarded the Government of the day as responsible for a war that would have been unnecessary if they had taken the right measures in earlier years. If we are committed to this dreadful gamble, I hope that we shall continue to press for peace and an end to the killing at the earliest possible moment on the basis of the United Nations resolutions. That, again, is a matter on which I hope the Government will, for the first time, show some independence of Washington.

6.17 pm

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I want to pick up the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred to today, as he has in the past, about United Nations resolution 660. As he reminded the House, it calls on Iraq to withdraw immediately from Kuwait and on Iraq and Kuwait immediately to begin negotiations on the resolution of their differences.

We must remember the context on which the resolution was passed. It was passed on the day of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait—while the invasion was still in progress. Those who are familiar with the United Nations Security Council will know that that resolution is common form in such a situation.

The Iraqis ignored that resolution and pressed forward. In the following days, they completed their occupation of Kuwait. It is not unreasonable, in view of their refusal to recognise the authority of the Security Council, for us now to say that the call for negotiations is out of date and is no longer relevant. I understand that that is the Security Council's position on negotiations between Kuwait and Iraq. Negotiations are not to be contemplated until there has been a total evacuation of Kuwait by Iraq, whatever may happen afterwards.

In recent days, I have been thinking about what I would say in a letter to a nephew if I happened to have one serving with British forces in the Gulf. I believe that I would say something like this. In every generation, a tyrant sets himself up with the ambition to conquer his neighbours—someone who defies reason and does not have the same human motives held by most of mankind. The world is learning slowly and painfully how to deal with such people. The first lesson is to deter them from aggression. That can be done by making it clear that aggression will mean that they will lose more than they gain. That worked in Europe but it failed in Iraq, because it was never tried—partly because the world's responsible countries, which are mostly democracies, had their attention focused elsewhere, partly because they did not take enough trouble to analyse Saddam Hussein and

partly because they thought that Iran, the enemy that Saddam Hussein was fighting for eight years, was an even more dangerous threat.

When deterrence fails, the responsible countries must make sure that the aggressor surrenders his gains. I am afraid that that is a much more painful and expensive job than it would have been to deter him in the first place. Nevertheless, we now have a new chance, both of deterring and of remedying aggression, because the Soviet Union appears to be joining the ranks of the responsible countries.

For the first time in the history of the United Nations we may be able to make it an effective peace-keeping body. Until now, on the really difficult questions, the United Nations has been paralysed by divisions between the permanent members of the Security Council, but in the past six months the Security Council has passed 12 resolutions which would have been inconceivable only a year or two ago. This development is of the greatest possible importance for the United Nations and for the future peace of the world. If the United Nations is effective in forcing Saddam to withdraw, a new and more hopeful phase could open up, with an effective and powerful United Nations able not only to monitor situations in which peace has been secured—which is what its so-called peace-keeping forces have done in the past—but to force an aggressor to withdraw or even to deter aggression. But if the United Nations fails this time to force Iraq to withdraw, it will be a serious blow to its power from which it may take years to recover. If the United Nations does not succeed this time, with virtually unanimous support, when will it succeed?

Some people argue that we should continue to rely on the United Nations economic sanctions to get Saddam out of Kuwait, but none of them can say how long it will take. Saddam seems to have absolute control and Iraq is a rich country by the standards of the developing world. No one can say how long the coalition against Iraq will hold firm. If it crumbles, sanctions will crumble too. The coalition was created only with great difficulty and with some very unlikely partners. Unexpected events, perhaps involving Israel—which is hated by the Arab members of the coalition—could break up the coalition before sanctions could force an Iraqi withdrawal.

If we do not take military action soon, we shall have to wait until the autumn. On 17 March Ramadan begins, during which it is doubtful that our Arab partners would agree to begin military action. It is followed soon after by the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca. In any case, by the late spring, the weather will be so hot as to make warfare difficult, especially if there is a risk of the Iraqis using chemical weapons.

Every responsible leader on the western side hates the prospect of war, not least those who can remember the second world war. This war will be shorter and probably more intense, but regrettably the signs are that Saddam is determined to have it. Repeated efforts have been made over nearly six months to persuade him that there is a better course, but one thing that we cannot do is reward his aggression. To do so would entrench him even more deeply in power and make him "a hero". The Leader of the Opposition rightly used that phrase to describe what Saddam's status will be if we fail the United Nations. Saddam might feel free to attack other countries. Other dictators around the world would try to seize their smaller neighbours. It would be a step towards a more dangerous world.

There are two other reasons for taking military action soon in the absence of the peaceful departure of Saddam from Kuwait. First, since August, the Iraqis have been systematically plundering Kuwait and torturing, murdering or expelling many of its citizens.

On purely humanitarian grounds, the sooner we liberate their country, the better. Some Opposition Members have correctly pointed out that that would cause Kuwaiti casualties, but the message that I get from the representatives of free Kuwait in this country is that they are reluctantly prepared to accept that situation. They want Iraq out of Kuwait soon, even if force has to be used.

Secondly, if Iraq, especially under Saddam, were to acquire nuclear weapons, the whole of the middle east—indeed, the whole civilised world—would be under a threat many times more terrifying than we have seen for half a century. That must not be allowed to happen. If there must be war with Iraq, it is better to have it now rather than later.

I would end by saying to my hypothetical nephew: you have an important job to do and the whole of Parliament is proud of you and your colleagues. If there is war, we pray that it will be brief. We are confident that it will be won.

6.26 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): No one in the House would welcome war—certainly no one who remembers previous wars, no one who has friends or family or constituents serving in the forces in the Gulf, and no one who, like me, has family living in Israel or in other areas where they are at grave risk. But we must ask, what is the alternative? Only if there is no real alternative must we accept the sacrifice of war.

The question is whether sanctions will work. It is hard for the House to make that judgment because we do not have the information on which to do so. By its nature, intelligence information goes to the Government of the day and, as my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition rightly said, it is not shared. I have always been a pessimist about the working of sanctions against Saddam Hussein. I know a little of the area and, for several reasons, I do not believe that they will work.

First, we in this decent land do not understand the nature of dictatorship and what a dictator can impose on the people over whom he has power.

Second, the living standard of the people in Iraq is very low, and they can sustain hardship and privation at a level that we would never endure.

Third, Saddam Hussein is a dictator who is totally ruthless. We should not forget that Saddam gassed and killed thousands of Kurds. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) reminded the House that Saddam did a turnaround in Iran. But that was only after a million people had died. Only then did he turn around and go, leaving matters exactly where they were—except that a million people died for nothing. We should not forget the Kuwaitis. They may not be, as someone said, at the top of the agenda. But they are people. I do not much like the Kuwaiti regime or the other feudal dictatorships; but still less do I like the middle eastern military dictatorships.

[Mr. Greville Janner]

What about linkage? I have always wanted a peace conference, but not a peace conference that cannot work —a peace conference where Israel is led to sacrifice on the altar of appeasement. If there are to be concessions, they will only come about in negotiation between people who believe that it is in their interests to concede, and who want to avoid war and death. They will not result from a linkage in which one party is drawn there in chains. That cannot work.

Some of us remember the sigh of relief that we gave —and I include myself even though I was a child about to be evacuated—when Chamberlain avoided war in 1938. We must recognise that he saved lives in 1938 but only at the cost of millions of lives afterwards. Those millions of lives included members of our own forces, members of our own families and, in my case, half my family.

I do not believe in the appeasement of dictators; it does not work. I should like to believe, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) explained with his typical eloquence, that sanctions could work. He has well explained the dread alternatives that would come with war. But appeasement does not work. The only linkage that we should have with Saddam Hussein leaving Kuwait is with peace and not by creating a modern middle eastern Czechoslovakia—which, by the way, will not sit down and meekly accept its own destruction.

I listened with interest to the Prime Minister complimenting Israel on the restraint that it has exercised so far. But for people to say—as some hon. Members have said to me—that if Israel is bombed they hope that it will not react is to live in the unreality of a dictatorship and not in the reality of a democracy. That democracy may have elected a Government whom we do not like, but, if I may say so, so has British democracy—and too often for my taste.

Israel is entitled to react. If Israel is bombed or if Saddam Hussein carries out his threat to drop chemicals or germs on people in Tel Aviv or in Jerusalem—including not only Jews like my own family, but also millions of Arabs—the Israelis will react powerfully, and so would we in the same circumstances. It is nonsense to suggest anything else.

Linkage is a concept known to some of us who dabble a little in magic. Hon. Members may remember the Chinese linking rings which link and unlink, and come together and fall apart entirely at the will of the conjuror. Such is the linkage that Saddam Hussein would wish to have. He did not go into Kuwait to help the Palestinians, but to help himself to Kuwait. He went into Kuwait for no reason other than that he wanted to occupy it, to take it over, and to have the oil. From that vantage point he would, effectively, command not only the middle east but the economies of the world.

I hope desperately that there will be no war—for personal reasons, for constituency reasons and for national reasons. If there is to be a war, I hope that it will be very short, that we will win it very fast and that the Americans and our troops will swiftly succeed, because if it is a long and nasty war on land, there will be devastation for us and for the rest of the world. But if the alternative to war today is war against Saddam Hussein in a few years' time when he has nuclear potential, that will be the ultimate disaster.

Some hon. Members may remember that, in 1981, I ventured to suggest that Israel was right to take out Iraq's nuclear potential. I do not believe that anyone agreed with me. This place rose up and shouted. But today I am grateful for Israel's action. I hope that other hon. Members will realise what a catastrophe it would be if Saddam Hussein now had a nuclear potential. I believe that if we must act, we must do so today, before he gets nuclear potential tomorrow.

6.34 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Today, we face war in all its hideousness, its hellishness and its horrors. Those of us who come from 20 years of terrorist war in Northern Ireland daily know something, albeit on a small scale, of the tragedies, sorrow, anguish and agony of deadly conflict. The cry of orphans, the sobbing of bereaved wives, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and the mutilation of bodies are ever before us in Northern Ireland.

However, the grim and terrible conflict that confronts us today is a sea of blood compared with a tiny crimson stream. It is the Gulf crisis, and what a gaping gulf it is. If war comes, how many will perish in its maw? However, grim and terrible as war is, there are some things worse than war—to surrender to diabolical aggression, to bow to ruthless tyranny, to permit the devilish murderer to enjoy his bloodsoaked gains, to turn a deaf ear to those who are being savagely tortured and to forsake a small country that cannot save itself. That is worse than war, because that is the sowing of the seeds of even greater aggression. It is the motivation of a tyrant to even greater atrocities and the encouragement of other dictators to follow a similar path, leading to an ever-widening circle of helpless, innocent victims.

The terrible consequences of neutrality in this case—which, in reality, is only surrender by instalments—are far worse than the consequences of war. The aggressor must be resisted and those who draw the sword must learn that they will perish by the sword.

When the House was recalled during the summer recess, I closed a brief speech with these words:

> "Many Hon. Members have used the words 'God forbid that this should happen'. I echo them. I call on the Prime Minister to go to see Her Majesty the Queen and advise her that this nation should have a day of prayer and humility to ask almighty God to avert this calamity."—[*Official Report*, 7 September 1990; Vol. 177, c. 877.]

I regret that that did not happen. I still believe that, at this dark and final hour, a miracle could happen. But war or no war, we need to acknowledge that we require the wisdom and help of Almighty God today. Human impotency stares us all in the face. Let not pride lull us into the deception that the race is to the swift and that the battle is to the strong. Let us, with humility, acknowledge our deep need today as a nation.

6.38 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): We have had an interesting debate. The vote tonight is the vote that the Government want as a mandate for the use of force from any time after 5 am tomorrow when the deadline expires. We must not be misled by the fact that it is on a different motion, and I shall come back to that. Every one of us has

a duty to speak his mind as best he can. I shall vote against the Government tonight and I hope that other hon. Members will vote against them or abstain.

This is not a debate between pacifists and realists or between those who favour the United Nations and those who do not; it is a debate about how we tackle a very grave problem and a grave attack on international legality.

The House is a representative body. The nation is very deeply divided on the use of force. On 11 December, when we last had a vote on the Adjournment, hon. Members voted by 10 to 1 in favour of the Government for a United Nations resolution bringing us to the point at which force would be used. That very day, Dr. Gallup conducted a poll, which has just been published and which showed that only 31 per cent. of the nation believed that force should be used. Earlier this week, *The Daily Telegraph* suggested that less than half the nation favoured the use of force. We in this place must reflect the views of those whom we represent, and that is what I am doing now.

I shall not go in great detail into the consequences of war when it comes; that has already been done. One million men, armed to the teeth—in many cases by the same arms manufacturers—face each other across the Iraqi-Saudi border. The casualties among troops will be heavy. There will be heavy casualties among the people in the region. Nuclear weapons may well be used. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said, Kuwait could be destroyed. There could be an ecological disaster if the oil fields are burnt. A worse third-world famine—there is already such a famine—could ensue as developing nations will not be able to pay the high price of oil. The economies of the west, which have depended to a great extent on the finances from the Arab countries in our banking system, could be affected.

War would solve nothing. We are talking not just about the legacy of terrorism, to which reference has been made—although I am sure that there would be such a legacy. The region that would then have to pick itself up would be in a far worse state, even if we scored what is called a victory after what is called a surgical strike, because Iraq and the area around it would have been destroyed.

I must say in passing—I raised this matter with you, Mr. Speaker, yesterday—that it is an utter disgrace to the House that the different views held by hon. Members should not be allowed to be tested in the Lobbies. In the United States, both Houses have had their votes. Why have the Government given us no chance to test our views on the French initiative; on the length of the sanctions process; or on the possibility of negotiation? I think that it is because they are not so sure of how the vote would go were all those options to be put. One has only to hear Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen on the subject of sanctions to realise that, if an amendment calling for sanctions to be given more time had been tabled, there would have been a vote heavy in favour of it.

That brings me to a point that must be mentioned: there is nobody left in the House who was serving in the House during the last world war. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, there is."] I am talking about serving in Parliament during the last war. I am talking about the effect of war on the British Parliament. We have seen—and we will see when British forces are sent into action—that it is the royal prerogative that allows the Government to go to war. That old feudal anachronism is wheeled out to bypass the House. We note reports in the newspapers to the effect that there will be briefings for Privy Councillors across the Front Benches when war begins. That is the way in which the parliamentary process consolidates knowledge at the top at the expense of others. The Archbishop of Canterbury has been brought forward to bless some "limited" bloodshed. The censorship of the media has already begun. No journalist in the Gulf is to move beyond his escort officer. The censorship of dissent by the media has also begun. The House is about to see the internment without trial of Iraqis, some of whom may have come here to escape from Saddam Hussein.

We are now experiencing jingoism—a term that I have looked up. I have listened to the Front-Bench spokesmen saying, "We do not want to fight." They keep saying that. They should finish the poem:

"We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do, we've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too."

This country is experiencing the greatest wave of jingoism that I have seen in my life. I am reminded of John Bright's speech in the House just before the Crimean war:

"The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings."

I think that I am the first person who has spoken in this debate who has made any reference to those people in society who actually want war. We know it from the popular press. We see it every day. But nobody has made any reference to it. President Bush said—it was reported in *The Daily Telegraph*— "We will destroy Iraq." He said that the Americans would destroy Iraq if Iraq did not withdraw. Where is the United Nations resolution saying that we will destroy Iraq? Hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, "We must topple Saddam before he gets nuclear weapons." Where is the UN resolution about toppling Saddam before he gets nuclear weapons? What emerges from debates of this character is that there is a major difference between the UN agenda, which is to restore legality, and the other agenda.

The arms manufacturers have made a lot of profits out of the arms that will be used. Their scientists will be watching to see which weapons work. War sells newspapers and boosts television ratings. It diverts attention from domestic problems.

I am delighted that the French have come out with their initiative because there must be simultaneously an Iraqi withdrawal, United Nations monitoring, an Arab peace force, a peace conference covering Palestine and Cyprus and guarantees of no attack. If the peace initiative put forward by France today were the policy of this Government and of the United Nations, we should avoid war and secure the objectives of the United Nations resolutions. It is no good talking about linkage—a subject that I mentioned when the Prime Minister kindly gave way. We can deny linkage in the conference chamber until we are blue in the face. But the day we attack Iraq and Iraq attacks Israel and Israel responds, the linkage that we deny will be burned into the history books on the battlefield. Then we shall be back where we started. After the war is over, we shall have to come to the French initiative, so why not have it before the bloodshed?

What is our duty to the troops? They are under orders. Our troops have been put under foreign operational command. We represent them in this place; we must question Ministers here. What the Government have done by denying us a substantive motion is to disfranchise our own troops so that the Members of Parliament who

[Mr. Tony Benn]

represent them cannot ask the question, and table the amendment, that would allow the interests of our troops to be considered.

This is the most important debate that has taken place in my 40 years in the House. Let my hon. Friends and others be clear: a vote for the Government tonight is a vote for war and will be interpreted as such. Each and every one of us carries a great responsibility. We have to set aside party feelings and electoral considerations, because we must never risk lives to win votes. The lives of millions of people in the world may be influenced by our vote. I beg the House not to give the Government the mandate for war which they want but to oppose the motion, or to abstain, so that we can look afresh at how this problem might be solved without resorting to the most catastrophic bloodshed.

6.48 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was very dismissive about the procedure that has been adopted tonight. He may remember that a motion for the Adjournment brought down a Government in 1940, so it is hardly a contemptible way of doing things. The right hon. Gentleman was certainly able to express his views comfortably, and he did so very well.

Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I shall vote for the Government tonight, although I am extremely unhappy with the course of events. I am quite sure that my right hon. Friends do not want war. I am almost equally sure that President Bush and Mr. Baker do not want war. Nevertheless, we seem almost certain to have a war which is likely to have horrendous consequences and which no one except Saddam Hussein wants. That surely shows that something has gone badly wrong with either the strategy or the diplomacy of the allies, or both. Unquestionably, the objective of getting Iraq out of Kuwait is right. Saddam's wholly inexcusable aggression cannot be allowed to stand. It is not the end which is at fault but the means.

A month or two ago a decision was evidently made not to wait for sanctions, backed up by the threat of force, eventually to compel an Iraqi withdrawal but to rely on force alone while demanding unconditional surrender. It was evidently decided that a massive military build-up, not supported by inducements, would force Saddam Hussein to withdraw. That strategy may still work—we have not reached the deadline yet—but it looks more unlikely with every moment that passes. It was always a high-risk strategy and one which, in my view, was unnecessary.

Sanctions were and are working well. The Government now tell us that sanctions would not do the job. However, they have not produced any evidence for that. The CIA thought that sanctions were working well until it was told to go away and think again. It has been shown that 97 per cent. of Iraq's oil has been cut off. The former chiefs of staff who testified to the congressional committee also believed that sanctions were working well.

Iraq has almost 1 million men under arms. For a country of its size, that is far too many for its economy. All in all, Iraq's position is not sustainable for long. Sanctions should have been allowed to continue taking their toll of the Iraqi economy and Saddam Hussein's war machine.

The allies' diplomacy—or American diplomacy—has been even more defective than their strategy, but perhaps it is still not too late to remedy that deficiency. It has been the allies' position that aggression cannot be rewarded—and it was repeated by President Bush in his letter to Saddam Hussein, which Tariq Aziz foolishly refused to deliver. The President wrote:

> "There can be no reward for aggression. Nor will there be any negotiation. Principle cannot be compromised."

Those would be unimpeachable sentiments in a perfect world. Certainly Saddam does not deserve any reward for his aggression or for his many subsequent atrocities. But, equally, innocent Iraqi civilians do not deserve to be bombed into oblivion and in any case "deserts" play a limited part in international politics and diplomacy. The Palestinians do not deserve what is happening to them on the west bank and in the Gaza strip and has been happening for a long time.

More importantly, the principle which Mr. Bush now says cannot be compromised has continually been comprised by the United States Government in the middle east for the past 25 years. Saddam Hussein fought an aggressive war against Iran and was duly rewarded by massive sales of arms—although not, I am happy to say, from the Government led by my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher). He was also rewarded by a great deal of money from countries everywhere around. Similarly, Israel invaded Lebanon two years later causing massive civilian casualties and was duly rewarded by not only masses of dollars but by retaining a so-called security zone on Lebanese soil. So the principle on which the United States now says that it stands is one which it has not hesitated to break in the past.

What is the reward that it is suggested that Saddam Hussein should be offered? It is an international conference on Palestine and the other problems of the middle east. Of course we all know that Saddam Hussein did not invade Kuwait to help Palestine or the Palestinians. Until very recently, he showed a minimum of interest in either Palestine or the Palestinians. Nevertheless, Mr. Perez de Cuellar has been in favour of an international conference on Palestine for the past eight years, as he said recently. In a non-binding statement, the Security Council has said that it, too, favours a conference at an appropriate time. So do a great many other people.

Now the American Government and apparently my right hon. Friends object to the French proposal for an international conference because they are opposed to linkage between the Kuwaiti and the Palestinian problems. Of course there is linkage. As former President Carter said:

> "There is no way to separate the crisis in the Gulf from the Israeli-Palestinian question".

Even the Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Levi, has courageously admitted that there is "psychological linkage" between the two problems.

Linkage is clear. Apart from anything else, America's behaviour over Israel and Palestine for many years is the reason why many Arabs support Saddam Hussein, however much they may detest him. Of course, I have no idea whether Saddam will accept the French proposals, but surely we ought to find out. Are we really going to go to war in order not to have a peace conference on Palestine? That would be not just the higher insanity but the lower insanity, especially as in any case we are in favour of a peace conference.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Ian Gilmour: No. I have only 10 minutes.

We all know that the United States has domestic political difficulties with its strong pro-Israeli lobby, but it is surely the task of America's allies to help the President to withstand that lobby and not meekly to support it. It would be grotesque to become bogged down in what is linkage and what is not. We are not playing games; we are playing for high stakes. Many lives are at stake. In any case, it should be possible to devise some form of words that produces unlinked linkage or linked unlinkage, or whatever. Even if it is not, to prefer war to agreeing to a peace conference would be unforgivable.

It may well be that Saddam Hussein now wants a war or would prefer a war to giving up Kuwait. He professes that he will win such a war. He is so out of touch that he may really believe that. If he wants a war, it can be argued, even by those like me who regret that the allies have got themselves into their present position, that he should have his way and be attacked as soon as possible. But we do not yet know for sure that Saddam wants a war. We do not know for sure that he cannot be persuaded to change his mind and choose peace, which would mean withdrawal from Kuwait.

Therefore, I very much hope that the French proposals will be adopted and put to Baghdad. If Saddam Hussein turns them down, we shall know that he is determined on war. In any case, if war comes, I shall wholeheartedly support our superb armed forces in the Gulf.

6.56 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): When I spoke in the emergency debate on 6 September last year I made the point that this whole moral crusade launched by the United States in the United Nations was based on their massive oil needs and consumption. I believe that there is universal awareness of that prime economic concern, even among some of the dunderheads on the Benches opposite. I cited the second reason as America's intent to overthrow Saddam Hussein for the protection of Israel and the furtherance of Israel's interests. However outrageous over the years Israel's behaviour has been, whether in the invasion of Lebanon, where the Israelis tried out a lot of United States new weapons and caused thousands of Lebanese deaths, or in their attempts to put down the intifada of the Palestinians in Palestinian territory—where they caused and are causing hundreds of deaths—United States policy has been to defend Israel's actions and to veto in the United Nations any effort by other nations to censure or condemn Israel's conduct. That is all because of the 3 to 4 per cent. of the total American population that makes up the Zionist lobby which dictates America's middle eastern policies.

Most hon. Members are unaware and unconcerned—one should never underestimate the ignorance of Members of the House of Commons on a whole range of issues—and most of our own people do not know, because of the appalling uninformative nature of the popular press, that America has had a strategic alliance with Israel since Reagan's day. Had we taken a test on that before the debate, many hon. Members would have said, "What are you talking about?". They do not know.

There can be no doubt that any military action planned by one of those countries is revealed to the other. When the strategic alliance was set up, no Pentagon planners could foresee that a situation might arise when the United States would work with "Arab allies" in a fake alliance such as has been clobbered together by the United States at the United Nations. The unrepresentative present leaders of countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Morocco—undemocratic and corrupt as each of them is—have joined the gang because of the massive bribe of American economic assistance and debt relief.

So the Americans now have a problem. How can they hold this rag-bag of Arab armies and others together if Israel joins in the attack on Iraq? Israel does not give a damn if the alliance falls apart as long as Saddam Hussein is destroyed, which is now the main aim of the whole operation.

When Israel is engaged, the alliance with the Arab countries will start to fall apart. As Iraq is attacked and devastated, the peoples of the Arab world will increasingly voice their hatred of America and there will be an immense growth in the fundamentalist holy war, anti-western drive. There will be a massive rejection of the present leaders of large parts of the Arab world.

If Iraq is destroyed, what can the hated west then hope to do to restore stability in the devastated area and to restrain Iraq's neighbours, Iran, Syria and Turkey, from falling upon the corpse to take their fancied bit of territory? In the process of all that, Israel will play as destructive a role as she can in removing such a powerful Arab country as Iraq. In the aftermath, by some contrived provocation, Israel will move into Jordan, which has long been her intention under the biblical fantasy of Eretz Israel. She will pretend that the Palestinians can settle there, under Israeli control of course.

Last year, when I mentioned negotiations as a proper way forward, the former Prime Minister went into an intemperate tantrum and screamed of appeasement—hon. Members will remember that—but what can be wrong with negotiation if by such a means we avoid a horrendous war? President Mitterrand deserves our gratitude for his efforts to prevent that, even at the last moment.

The Americans persist in their refusal to countenance a conference as part of a peace outcome. However, why should the Arabs, and the Palestinians in particular, believe that a conference will follow the defeat of Iraq? America and Israel have persistently refused to allow a proper resolution of the Palestinian problem and the wrongs that the Palestinians have undergone for more than 40 years.

What has happened to the Labour party? We seem to be so electorally eager that every consideration must be subservient to winning the next election. Every policy, and apparently every principle, must be subject to that aim. If opposing the destruction of large areas of the middle east and avoiding the devastation and the thousands of deaths that would ensue, together with the appalling economic damage to the countries of the third world, leads to the loss of popular support, it is a price the Labour party should be prepared to pay. Principles should still apply just occasionally in politics and, more particularly perhaps, to the Labour party.

7.3 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I shall leave the speech of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) to be sorted out within his conscience and that of his party.

[Sir Hector Monro]

I strongly support the Government and their view that we must support the United Nations. That has also been the message from the Leader of the Opposition and that of the Liberals. That is a key point and we must not overlook it.

I have full praise for my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence for the way in which they have negotiated in the past six months in a particularly difficult period of our history. They have come through with high marks, and they command total support from most hon. Members.

Of course everyone wants peace, but all peaceful means now seem to have been exhausted. Today we have listened to the French contribution, which is now being considered, but I do not believe that Saddam Hussein has said anything in the past five months to suggest that he has any intention of listening to reason.

There seems to be no alternative but to become involved in the war that has been going on for five months. In common with other hon. Members, I believe that further delay is much more likely to cost lives than getting on with action now.

Those who advocate more time for sanctions must balance that view against the nuclear capability of Iraq and, in the shorter term, the inevitable stronger defences that will be erected around the border of Kuwait. It is also important to bear in mind Iraq's input in terrorism in recent years. Its opportunity to influence and to encourage further terrorism throughout the world must be stopped as soon as possible.

There is every indication to suggest that we shall be fighting soon—I hope for a short time only. In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), I have immense confidence in our services in the Gulf, and those of our allies.

Recently I visited strike command and I was immensely impressed by the chain of communications. I was also heartened by what my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East said about the visit of the Select Committee on Defence to the Gulf. I agree with my hon. Friend about the role of the media. I hope that they will allow our forces and those of our allies to get on with winning the war. The media must try to keep out of the way as it is extremely difficult to fight a war with television cameras poking over one's shoulder all the time. There is a great responsiblity on the BBC and the IBA to behave extremely responsibly and in a manner supportive of our forces in the Gulf.

I echo the praise that my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East has given to our forces, but I should also like to praise our reservists and auxiliaries. We are lucky to have such excellent and well trained reservists. I am involved with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, which is a fine force with a fine history. It began its flying operations in the 1920s, and 16 of its 21 squadrons fought in the battle of Britain. Today we have 19 squadrons and units, and all the auxiliaries, in common with the Territorial Army, are volunteers. They train regularly and attend annual camps. They are highly efficient and form part of the line of battle of the Royal Air Force.

In a time of emergency it is certainly right that those auxiliaries should be called out, and the Government have been right to do so. The auxiliaries are trained just for that purpose to support the regular RAF at times of crisis. I am glad to note that 4626 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron from Wiltshire has gone to the Gulf in support of the RAF medical team. The auxiliaries responded to the call almost to a man—or should I say to a woman since there are more female nurses and doctors in the squadron than male. They deserve great credit for their immediate response in support of our forces in the Gulf. It is important to know, however, that there is a good procedure for those who have compassionate reasons not to be called out. A few people met those reasons and were allowed to stay at home.

The Royal Auxiliary Air Force also has other squadrons specialising in aerodrome defence, movements and communication. Those squadrons are anxious to be called out, if required, whether to go to the Gulf or fill in for RAF regulars in this country or in Germany.

I stress the importance of calling out reservists in an emergency under the Reserve Forces Act 1980. If one is a reservist, it is much easier to be called out than to have to go to one's employer or to one's wife and family and say, "I think I ought to volunteer for the Gulf; I hope you do not mind if I am away for some months." If people are called out, they know where they stand. Their jobs are secure and they know that the financial side will be looked after. The response has been first class not only in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force but in the Territorial Army. I know how well 205 Scottish General Hospital, RAMC, responded to the call. It is important to keep units operating as units with their own officers and NCOs.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has been helpful on all aspects of the Gulf, particularly in answering hon. Members' queries. Is he making progress on reservists' pay and the offer of a 20 per cent. increase in their military pay where the circumstances require it, bearing in mind that reservists have been called out at short notice and may have had domestic, mortgage and other problems to resolve?

With the Gulf and Russia highlighting the uncertainty of the world, should we not think again about "Options for Change"? I appreciate the predicament in which the Ministry of Defence is placed. On the one hand, it is taking a leading role in preparation for the Gulf and for what looks like inevitable war, and on the other it is working on "Options for Change" when it does not know what the position will be in a year's time. The Gulf problem blew up out of nothing. In recent weeks new problems have arisen in Russia. We should put "Options for Change" at the back of our minds for another year until we see what forces we need and where we are likely to need them.

Our service men are anxious to know their long-term future, but they would be happier if they could see a settled world ahead, with their responsibilities set out in front of them, rather than taking a sporting chance on what may happen in 12 months' time. Therefore, decisions on "Options for Change" should be postponed because they will be highly controversial and will cause much hardship and hurt in the Army, particularly if cap badges are to disappear. This is not the moment to contemplate major changes.

I give entire support to the Government and to our forces in the Gulf. I am sure that the Government will have a massive majority tonight.

7.13 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): A new system of common security in the world depends on our capacity to uphold the United Nations charter. That means upholding it all over the world. The Soviet Union is flouting the United Nations charter in Lithuania by depriving that country of the right to self-determination. Israel has not kept to resolution 242 in the occupied territories. Iraq is in flagrant breach of the United Nations charter in its occupation of Kuwait. The linkage of those three issues is the United Nations charter; they cannot be linked in any other way than by a determination to uphold the charter.

In Iraq there is a real chance, for the first time since the charter was formulated in San Francisco, to get world powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, so to commit themselves to the United Nations charter that it will be much harder for them to escape its implications in other parts of the world.

The key issue in the debate is whether we ought to continue with sanctions and hold back on the use of force. Few people have denied that in order to uphold the charter it is necessary to threaten both economic sanctions and the use of force. It is a question of the balance between the two. It has been little short of a miracle that the multinational coalition has been able to hold so strongly for the last five and a half months. The real reason why we are approaching a time when the multinational force will have to commit itself to armed force in order to throw Iraq out of Kuwait is that, if we are honest, we know that the coalition is coming under considerable strain.

Eduard Shevardnadze in his recent speech made it clear that he was under intense domestic attack for the stance that he had taken on behalf of the Soviet Union over Iraq. We need to remember that the Soviet Union was the largest supplier of arms to Iraq and had a treaty of friendship with it; the continuation of the coalition is causing great strain within the Soviet Union.

France is the other large supplier of arms to Iraq and the European country closest to it. We have seen over the last month how much strain the coalition is causing inside France, with opinion polls showing a majority against committing French forces to uphold the United Nations charter in Iraq.

We have seen how over the past few months the world has begun to accept that Saddam Hussein's reason for attacking Kuwait was to uphold the rights of the Palestinians. No country has a better record of upholding Palestinian rights and providing jobs and occupations for Palestinians and substantial financial support for the Palestinian cause than Kuwait. It is a total corruption of the truth to believe that the invasion of Kuwait has anything whatever to do with the Palestinians. To believe that the path to a solution to the invasion of Kuwait lies through Jerusalem is a delusion.

We must remember that dictators are often impervious to logic and reason. It has been obvious for some time that Saddam Hussein is ready to fight. We will not get through the next few difficult days and weeks with the correct judgment if we think that Saddam Hussein is waiting for diplomatic coverage and an excuse to withdraw. We will have to face the need to eject him by armed force. I do not think that the coalition can withstand until the autumn, or for another five or six months, economic sanctions.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why not?

Dr. Owen: I have tried to explain why I do not believe that it can. In many ways I wish it could.

So we come to the whole question of what should be our posture during any armed warfare and our attitude to a possible ceasefire and a peaceful settlement. I hope that there will be no question of repeating the mistakes of Vietnam when there was far too much political interference with the military. It is a hard thing to say, but this war will have to be fought fast and furiously. There is no room for risking a missile with a gas warhead or a biological warhead coming through the defences, whether it be to Israel, to Saudi Arabia or to any of the surrounding countries. The military must feel that they have the freedom to prosecute a war with the aim of the defeat of Saddam Hussein. That is the fundamental aim.

We must recognise, too, that we shall be doing a service to the cause of peace if we do not try to draw this out with a token force or any of the other partial scenarios. He must know that it will be all-out war. Of course, that war will have to be taken to Iraqi territory. It cannot be confined entirely to fighting within Kuwait. I shall not pretend to be an armchair strategist and shall say nothing more than that I believe that the military leaders must be given the essential freedom to prosecute the war as they feel best to achieve success and protect the lives of the troops under their command.

In my judgment, Saddam Hussein will and does believe that if he negotiates from the battlefield he will achieve more success. If he demands a ceasefire it will be hard not to stop. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that our aims go beyond the United Nations resolution which has not specified our anxiety about nuclear weapons or mentioned the Iraqis' capability for manufacturing chemical and biological weapons or the vast conventional forces that they have assembled. Those four elements are a threat to the region's future security and are a perfectly legitimate target in the event of armed hostilities. That is why they should be hit and hit fast in the early part of the battle. It will not be possible to get back into this once a ceasefire has been declared.

The next issue involves lifting sanctions and what happens after a ceasefire. It seems essential that there must be on-site, on-the-ground inspection and verification of the armed potential of Iraq in the subsequent period. We should not agree to a ceasefire until that is conceded, signed, sealed and settled.

How bad is the war likely to be? Everyone is preparing public opinion for the worst, and it is right to do so. So often things go wrong in war and casualties are frequently caused by mistakes. But we can slightly exaggerate the strength of the forces against us. There is no doubt that in conventional tank warfare, dug in, the Iraqis have built up considerable expertise. I do not think that that is likely to be our first chosen course for battle. However, our superiority in the air is massive, our technology considerable and our intelligence excellent. With good heart, united forces and a clear command structure, we have every prospect of a quick and clean success.

The issue of the command structure is of the utmost importance. I do not expect the Foreign Secretary or the Secretary of State for Defence to reveal all the details in the House—we all know that the matter is massively complex —but I hope that the command structure is being given

[Dr. Owen]

constant attention because that is where we are most vulnerable and where the whole exercise could come painfully unstuck.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay) *rose*——

Dr. Owen: I shall not give way.

The maintenance and upholding of the United Nations charter is a perfectly legitimate and noble strategic political objective for our armed forces. It may well be that, in future, British forces will rarely, if ever, fight a purely national war for the integrity of the United Kingdom. It is more likely that they will act as part of a multinational force upholding the United Nations charter around the world. Therefore, it is immensely important that that objective is not only achieved, but is seen to be the proper responsibility of our armed forces. If it is successful, the fact that we were able to achieve that end with democratic allies from the west and from the Arab countries will be of tremendous importance. I hope that we are successful and that the war is prosecuted quickly and brutally.

7.23 pm

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). I think that I am one of only two hon. Members with a son in the Gulf. He has been there for three and a half months. The House will realise, therefore, that our family, together with 35,000 other families, has followed what has been happening in the Gulf with acute attention in recent months. Such families listen to every news report and daughters-in-law throughout the country hang on every word given forth. Yesterday, I listened to the Panorama programme which reviewed the position in the Gulf.

To a man and woman, all the young people of our armed forces who went out to the Gulf signed on voluntarily. I believe that the vast majority of them signed on consciously knowing that at some time it might be necessary for them to serve this country. Those parents interviewed on the Panorama programme who pretended that that was not so were not faithfully representing their own children.

Our thanks should go out to people such as Mrs. Sue Thomas of Swansea, who is perhaps unknown to all hon. Members except the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). She is a lady who is on her own and, with her son in the Gulf, has acted as a co-ordinator for the news and has helped to ease problems among the young men and women out there. I pay tribute to her work and hope that British Telecom will respond to the letter sent to it by the hon. Member for Swansea, East in which he suggested that Mrs. Thomas's phone bill should be ignored. If it is not, I will pay for it.

I pay tribute to the Ministry of Defence and Ministers. There have been a few slip-ups, as there are bound to be, but the commitment shown by Ministers has been absolutely superb. I have put issues to them, responses have come back via the blueies and other colleagues have made similar approaches. On behalf of our forces who have been in the Gulf during the past months, I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends who have worked long and hard.

I re-echo the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) about the media. Our troops in the Gulf will not understand it if the media undertake reporting that is to the detriment of the forces. I hope that the media will also understand that, while we in the House are experienced in handling the media, that is not true of the ordinary man or woman soldier in the field. I hope that that fact will be respected.

I pay tribute to the national health service. I have checked on the reception that will be given to casualties by our hospitals and my research has, thankfully, produced a 100 per cent. response to the effect that this country's hospitals are ready, instructions are clear and preparations have been made. That problem had to be faced and I thank the Secretary of State for Health for the fact that it has been.

The families of our young people in the Gulf know that their relatives face a number of questions. They know that they will be wondering whether it is right that they should be there in the first place. All those in the services to whom I have talked know and all the correspondence that I have received shows that our young people understand why they are in the Gulf. They recognise that it is unacceptable for a small country to be invaded and virtually erased from the map. They also understand that there is a difference between the position in Kuwait and that involving Grenada, Panama and some of the other examples put forward. They appreciate the total purpose of sanctions —a controversial issue. We have all known in our hearts that sanctions imposed on an Arab nation led by a despot were never likely to persuade him to withdraw from a territory that had become the 19th part of his country. Sanctions were imposed to communicate to him that the world was serious and that he had better take the world seriously.

The time has come when we have to make the sad choice to take up arms now or to postpone doing so for about another eight months. It is all very well for hon. Members in this Chamber, which is air conditioned—and all very well for that general in the United States whom I, too, heard say that our colleagues in the Gulf would rather get sunburned—but I wonder how many hon. Members have served in the far east. I worked there for two years and I can testify that it is hard enough to work in hot conditions, so it must be much more difficult to fight in them. How many hon. Members have ever put on a survival suit? I and a few others have, but I have never done so in 120 degrees of heat. If our armed forces are to be asked to fight, let them fight in the relatively cool weather of the next six to eight weeks.

Our young people out in the Gulf have taken their training seriously; they have moved up to the front line; they recognise that they have a job to do; and they are exceedingly well trained. I wish them all godspeed to return to this country.

7.31 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): It is incredible that the attitude to the United Nations appears to have two separate lives—post-August 1990 and pre-August 1990. Hon. Members seem to take their bearings from resolution 660; from it they lay down a new order for the United Nations and they wipe the slate clean of all the transgressions against international law and United Nations authority before that date. Some hon. Members

suggest, so it seems, that we can ignore the transgressions of the United States in Panama, Grenada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cambodia and Vietnam; and we can ignore the flouting of international law by the United States as witnessed in its refusal to accept the ruling by the international court that it illegally mined the ports of Nicaragua and should now pay compensation. All that is to be put aside and the new world order that we all seek in the post-cold war period must start from the invasion of Kuwait.

Then we are surprised when the Iraqis and many Arab countries and other nations throughout the world feel aggrieved by our logic and tell us—rightly—that the rules are being made to fit in with our objective, which is oil.

It is also interesting to note that, while pleading for so much peace, we are taken inexorably towards a catastrophic war which threatens consequences beyond our imagination or comprehension and which will inflict untold ecological and environmental damage. It will inflict horrendous loss of life, both civilian and military, in the middle east and disrupt the region's political and economic stability—as well as that of the rest of the world. By ignoring the prospects of ecological and environmental changes that may result, we are possibly putting at risk 1 billion people in the world, whose crops will fail and who will be faced with climatic changes. And we contemplate a disaster on this massive scale in the name of a moral imperative to which I, too, would subscribe—but consistently. It is wrong to invade another country, wrong to use economic and military might to blunder around the world in order to secure a country's political and economic objectives. But that is what the United States has done and it is not surprising——

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): What about the Soviet Union?

Ms. Primarolo: No nation that sits on the Security Council can fairly claim not to have transgressed international law.

All these immense problems are being contemplated because we refuse to negotiate or consider what may be on offer. We would rather send thousands to their deaths and put at risk the lives of hundreds of thousands more in a game of brinkmanship that passes for so-called diplomacy—trying to frighten someone into doing something instead of sitting down and negotiating with him.

The liberation of Kuwait is certainly important, and Iraq must be made to withdraw from it—but not by a scorched earth policy which will leave nothing behind. Where is the international justice and peace behind these double standards? How can we build peace on war? The charter of the United Nations was drawn up to avoid war and to settle disputes by peaceful negotiation, so how can we build a future when we use that very organisation to declare war and unleash its disaster on the world?

We live in an era of modern communications, and aggrieved Muslims throughout the world believe that they must continue to seek redress of injustice, so in the next decade this crisis will still be unresolved. War solves nothing: it creates further crises.

It is still unclear exactly what is being sought. There have been many suggestions of how we could solve the crisis. It has been said, for instance, that the Kuwaitis are prepared to lease back the disputed islands. The press has reported that the Saudi Minister of Defence has agreed that there should be negotiations over the disputed oil field. Iraq has committed itself, after the crisis, to the Egyptian proposal of last April to set up a security and peace conference for the region at which all the destructive weapons both of Israel and of Iraq would be the subject of negotiations. If all that is so close to being achieved, what is it that appears to be forcing us into war?

It appears to be two things. First, there is our absolute refusal to deal with the Palestinian issue and to recognise the linkage, despite the fact that since 1980 the EC has actively pursued a peace conference in order to settle that question, despite the fact that it is United Nations policy and despite the fact that the occupation by Israel of the Palestinian areas has been declared illegal. We are prepared to go to war on that basis.

The Mitterrand proposal is accepted by almost everybody except ourselves and the United States. Even the Saudis have said that they are prepared to consider it. Yet we quibble about the words. We will not go to the negotiating table. We are prepared to use the organisation that we say should establish the new world order on a vote to veto something to prevent a new policy coming forward that should achieve peace. That is not the way in which decisions should be made, and it is certainly not the way in which we should be considering the facts before us in this crisis.

In Bristol, as in many other parts of Britain and throughout Europe, a massive peace movement is developing. That peace movement is making its view clear. In December, Bristol presented to Downing street a petition of 8,000 signatures, and one of 5,000 signatures today, pressing the Government to continue to seek a peaceful situation to the conflict with Iraq and to give the United Nations sanctions time to take effect. We urge the Goverment to do the same: avoid the risks of war which may involve nuclear and chemical weapons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order.

7.41 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): No thinking person can hold other than the utmost forebodings of a long war in the Gulf. Any talk that we heard earlier today about jingoism in the House or outside is completely unreal.

As a Member with a substantial defence base of the Fleet Air Arm to represent, I am grateful for the chance to say how welcome it will be to our service men that the House, as I believe it will tonight, gives them its overwhelming support for whatever they are called upon to do.

Saddam Hussein, like Hitler before him, has demonstrated now beyond conjecture that he wants war. Sadly, there is no point any longer trying to fathom why he does so. Nevertheless, the democracies and many individuals representing them, officially and unofficially, have been right to go to the end of the road to see if he can be deflected by reason, provided that we continue to uphold the one principle that naked aggression cannot be allowed to prosper; the principle that so many before us more worthy than us found, sooner or later, that they had to be prepared to fight and many to die for. They faced it even more reluctantly at the time than we are doing here today in the House. Any other course can only allow the evil to fester and progress to a far greater calamity in the end.

[Mr. Robert Boscawen]

The United Nations endorsement of that principle is an enormous plus for the future peace of the world, and I am delighted that it was so ably endorsed this afternoon at the beginning of the debate by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who made a particularly fine speech and by the Leader of the Opposition at the beginning of his speech.

That may be a simple and certainly honourable purpose, but it is the better for remaining simple and undistorted by clever words and complex formulas. There has, of course, to be a complex settlement at the end in the area of the vastly different historical and tribal interests, but it cannot come about through one aggressor robbing a neighbour of his life and freedom for his own peculiar ends.

That the Government and our allies should allow sanctions to continue as long as possible in order to change Saddam Hussein's mind is an important and persuasive argument, but unless we can be sure that that will change Saddam Hussein's mind, our leaders should reject it. They must ask themselves which method will best protect the lives of our service men and allies in the Gulf. That is what our leaders will want above all else, and our people will want to see that they do it. When they ask themselves that question, I believe that they will realise that if they wait too long the lives of our service men will be at greater risk. Therefore, the argument for prolonging sanctions should not be applied. To do so would also take away from the military leaders one of their greatest weapons—that of surprise—and we should in no circumstances allow that.

It appears likely that our service men will shortly be at war in the Gulf. Having spoken to the commanding officer of the fleet establishment in my constituency, I have been convinced that, disagreeable though whatever comes may be, the service men are ready and their equipment is well oiled. We have every right to be proud of them in whatever they do.

The war will be disagreeable. The extent of violence at the beginning of modern war is bound to be terrible and our armed services will suffer some heavy bombardment, many of them for the first time. Disagreeable though that will be, and the noise terrifying, they will soon learn that they will come through and still be around at the end of it. They will learn quickly that noise can be a friend on the battlefield as well as causing them a pit in the bottom of the stomach. They will experience too the marvellous feeling of hearing the support of their own aeroplanes, guns and allies. I am certain that they will give us cause for pride and they will show the tremendous feel for humanity which the British service man is incomparable in displaying.

It is to service men's families and loved ones at home that we should give our greatest regard at this time. Their quiet and silent role is perhaps the hardest of all. In particular, the press and the media have the enormous responsibility of maintaining the guidelines and ground rules laid down in order to allay their anxieties. The media have the power to cause tremendous and unnecessary anxiety in the homes of many of our service people if they fail to meet their responsibilities. We all invite the media to remember that.

We pray that some of our forebodings will be disproved. We ask for the safe return of the British men and women in the Gulf and for those of our allies. We know that they will not let us down. Let us see that we in this House give them our full support.

7.50 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): At the end of 1945, I was a young airman stationed in the middle east and awaiting demobilisation, along with millions of other service men who had served throughout the second world war. I looked forward to a different Britain and to a different world from that which existed when we entered the 1939 war. Over the next 40 years, I fought and worked for a United Nations that would be a world force for peace and sanity.

That was prevented by the catalogue of disasters that was outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo). The cold war prevented the United Nations from working in the way that we wanted, not least because of the Vietnam war, Brezhnev doctrine, Cuban missile crisis, and many other incidents.

In the present post-cold war period, we have for the first time a unanimous United Nations decision aimed at implementing a policy agreed by its members, and that gives us a fresh opportunity. Over the past 30 or 40 years, many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have, like myself, fought for a fresh order based on the United Nations. It is no use saying that one wants to achieve such an order but then to deny the United Nations the means to implement its policies, if that becomes necessary.

Having said that, I am firmly of the opinion that not enough time has been allowed for sanctions against Iraq to be properly implemented. The Prime Minister has not given any information today about the way in which they have failed or about the main problems. I believe that we must go that extra mile in trying to achieve peace before resorting to force. That is essential, just as it is essential that the French proposals should be examined in detail. They should be put on the table, and the House ought to have an opportunity to debate them.

Mr. Winnick: But there has been no response to them in Baghdad.

Mr. Orme: Then let them be put to Baghdad, and let us see what the reaction is. That would not be to display any weakness, but rather would be to explore every avenue.

I am very chary of the one or two armchair critics or generals who talk at such times of a quick and swift end to the war. I served in uniform in a war for six years, and it did not end either swiftly or without massive loss of life, particularly in the western world and in the far east.

I am under no illusion about the regime in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Throughout the 1980s, I was involved in an organisation which was concerned with civil rights and with the rights of certain Iraqis. In 1981, my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and I went to the Iraqi embassy to plead on behalf of trade unionists and socialists in that country who were being tortured and executed. It was a harrowing experience to enter that embassy and hear the steel doors clang behind us, and to see everyone inside carrying automatic weapons. That is the kind of regime with which we are dealing. What has happened to Iraqi trade unionists and socialists, as well as to the Kurds, is an example of the horrors that have been perpetrated under the present

regime. The occupation of Kuwait is another indication of the extent of the action that the Iraqi Government are prepared to take.

I am sure that no right hon. or hon. Member is under any illusion about the need to avoid military action, if that is possible, and to find a solution—which is why we must go that extra mile. Nevertheless, and as has been said by many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, if British troops become involved, we are bound to support them. However, let us hope that progress can be made and that every avenue will be explored. I trust that, when the Foreign Secretary replies tonight, he will describe the French proposals in more detail than did the Prime Minister, report what has happened at the United Nations today, and say whether the Government are prepared to go that extra mile.

7.57 pm

Mr. Julian Critchley (Aldershot): If my hair is as red as my suit, it is due not to vanity but to enemy action.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) asserted that wars solved nothing. She is wrong, for on occasion wars do provide a solution. One might argue that the Great War solved nothing and only postponed a second world war, but the hon. Lady cannot assert that the second world war solved nothing when in fact it brought the downfall of the Hitler regime.

It is clearly true that wars are much easier to start than to finish, and that the objectives for which countries go to war frequently change during the course of the hostilities. Given the likelihood that we shall be at war in a day or two, we should ask ourselves certain questions about the Iraqi situation. If the objective is only to liberate Kuwait —which is clearly a desirable objective—would the allies then be in the position of having to defend a land frontier against an Iraqi counter-attack, and of having to do so indefinitely?

Is it our objective to overthrow Saddam Hussein? If so, one wonders quietly whether there are enough freedom-loving, sensible Iraqi parliamentarians prepared to come forward to administer Iraq in the circumstances of their country's humiliating defeat. However, although these problems are acute, it is not the allies' fault that they should be posed for us to solve. It is the fault of the "thief of Baghdad" himself—Saddam Hussein, whose aggression is clearly unforgivable.

The former leader of the Social Democrats, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), referred briefly to the position in the Soviet Union vis-a-vis Iraq. How ironic it is too that it should be, and probably now is, in the western interest that the cohesion of the Soviet Union remains a reality. If the Soviet Union were to break into a series of warring, nationalist-based republics, who would keep control of the 12,000 nuclear warheads which the Soviet armed forces possess? I have always been convinced that the most significant and sinister member of the Communist party is the Soviet equivalent of my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow).

I speak as the Member for Aldershot, which is the home of the British Army. We have a thousand Aldershot-based service men in the Gulf at present; and, over and above that, the Cambridge military hospital, which for years has sustained the national health service locally, has moved lock, stock and barrel to the Gulf. Clearly, local residents are anxious that it should return and I have been able to persuade the Minister for Health to give an undertaking that it will reopen.

The problem is that we are now obliged to face the real possibility of war. I do not think that the French initiative is especially useful. Clearly we have to avoid linkage where we can. When it comes, the attack must be executed swiftly, because waiting indefinitely would lower the morale of our troops in the Gulf.

There is a debate between airmen and soldiers. Airmen believe that they have the power, which might of itself win the war. Clearly, it is more important that the Army moves into Kuwait swiftly behind an air attack, because unless one occupies the enemy's territory there is no point is having soldiers out there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred to "Options for Change". It would be tactful of the Government, and especially the Minister of Defence, if they stopped speculating in public for the time being about "Options for Change" because soldiers who are going out to the Gulf to fight, and possibly to die, are not a little anxious that they may eventually return to find that the units, regiments and corps to which they belong no longer exist. There is a good case for a peace dividend, on the assumption that all in the garden will be lovely indefinitely, but I think it wise to stop talking for the moment about "Options for Change".

One certainly gets the impression that majority opinion in this country is reluctantly in favour of hostilities. The situation is not of our making but of Saddam Hussein's making. We have a great interest in destroying his chemical, nuclear and biological capability. We shall enter hostilities as a member of the United Nations. What is important about the exercise is that we are in pursuit not of British national interest but of something different, although just as important—the principle of a real world authority, which should be able to protect small nations against large nations and thereby determine and guarantee the freedom of small as well as large countries. That principle is worth fighting for.

8.4 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): This evening's debate has been wide-ranging, fascinating and, at times, confusing. As a father, and also as a minister giving guidance to people, I used to say, "Never threaten a child unless you intend to carry out the threat, and never make a promise unless you intend to keep it." The tragedy is that having told Saddam that he must leave Kuwait by 15 January, if we are not prepared to stand by our word if he does not withdraw, we shall have opened the way for further aggression.

The hidden agenda is not simply Kuwait—and, ultimately, control of international oil—but the struggle for leadership of the Arab nation. That is one aspect which we need to underscore at present because, in the light of the comments of the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), Muslims throughout the world will be bitter as a result of any action taken at this time. We have to remind them, and others, that the aggressor was Saddam, against a Muslim people, the Kuwaitis. Therefore, we have to go beyond the concept of so-called western imperialists—capitalists or Christians, under whatever guise—oppressing the Arab east. The fact is that there has been naked

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

aggression by President Saddam Hussein against the Kuwaiti people and, ultimately, a threat to the Arab world.

Some hon. Members have asked about the French proposal as though it was on the table and Saddam had sat down to discuss it and was prepared to accept it. I am reminded that the Secretary-General of the United Nations said that it takes two to tango and that he did not find a lovely lady in Baghdad with whom he could tango. We have to stand by the role of the United Nations. When I visited it in November with other hon. Members, we discovered that the general consensus was that if the United Nations could not deal with this problem it could deal with nothing because this is the first time that there has been unprovoked naked aggression by one member of the United Nations against another. If the United Nations cannot deal with that, its whole structure is threatened.

I ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to suggest to us tonight whether, among the other proposals, there have been any proposals from Algeria and the Yemen, as has been reported in the press, and especially whether he is aware if Her Majesty's ambassador in Sana'a has been given a proposal for the Arab solution in Yemen, because when I was there with another colleague as part of the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation we heard much of the Arab solution and we pressed to be given details. A solution was presented to us and we asked that it be put in writing and given to the ambassador in Sana'a so that it could be transmitted to the Government, not as the personal comment of an individual or as a foreign commentary, but as a commitment from a nation which was speaking a great deal about an Arab solution. The tragedy of our visit was that we heard people in public criticising the use of force, but in private saying that they did not think that Saddam would be put out of Kuwait without the use of force. They all faced that reality. When people seek a linkage between Israel, Palestine and Kuwait it does not exist merely in the event of war developing but because of what has happened—and has already been mentioned by one right hon. Member tonight, to the best of my memory.

The Palestinians have suffered greatly as a result of the invasion of Kuwait. The finances that were being advanced from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help them have dried up. Along with others, the Palestinian people must face the harsh reality that the whole region is suffering—not because an independent nation, Israel, has sought to defend its frontiers and in so doing has taken over other territory to protect herself. I believe, as others do, that there will come a time when a peace conference will have to be held to make new arrangements there. Nevertheless, we should bear in mind what was said at two IPU conferences by the Speaker of the Knesset, who had himself suffered in internment camps and who had seen so many of his people suffer in the holocaust. He put it on record that he would never remove a homeland from the Jewish people. Where they live is their own decision; they can go where they like in a free society. In his view, however, those who talk glibly about a solution should remember that people have a right to live in a homeland. I should like to think that the funds that have been available in the Gulf during past years, and could become available in the future, might be used purposefully to help Palestinian refugees to resolve the problems, rather than allowing terrorism to continue and destroy the community.

Finally, I must put on record the support of the people in Northern Ireland for our forces in the Gulf. Some of our people are serving with the British forces, and we stand beside them. We recognise, however, that there are others who, looking for peace, fondly believe that it will come as a result of prayers. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) pleaded for a day of prayer to be called by the former Prime Minister, but that has not been done. Perhaps we do not want to bring the Almighty into the matter, but there is a lesson to be learnt from the last world war. Only when our people humbled themselves and sought the help of the Almighty did we begin to be delivered from the dictator, and I firmly believe that only when we humble ourselves again will we see the way forward to success.

I remind anyone who takes a jingoistic view—whether in the international forces or in Saddam's regime—of an old biblical quotation, which says, roughly, "Let not him that putteth on his armour boast as he that puts it off."

8.12 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I believe that the key reason why this country may find itself involved in war before very long is the overriding need to do all that is necessary to preserve and enforce United Nations collective security in the post-cold war era.

Even at this late hour, we all hope that Saddam Hussein will order an Iraqi withdrawal. He has acted at the 11th hour before, and may do so again. The world community, however, cannot afford to wait indefinitely for economic sanctions to work. That seemed to be the siren song in part of the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, and, indeed, in that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). I believe that they were both wrong, for a delay in the use of force beyond the present cool season in the Gulf could rule out such action altogether.

This is because frontline troops cannot be kept at maximum readiness for ever and have to be rotated. It is because of the political difficulties of holding the United Nations coalition together, especially for Arab states such as Egypt and Syria, whose Governments have problems in holding their peoples under an American-led United Nations banner, and because the Soviet Union itself is in a critical state which means that we can no longer rely on the continuity of Soviet foreign policy. It is also because of the political difficulties of maintaining the resolve of public opinion in free democratic societies with the modern mass media—societies such as the United States and even the United Kingdom.

There is little or no evidence that Saddam Hussein really cares about the fate of his own people, let alone the Kuwaiti people. Indeed, he seems to have an almost infinite capacity to impose cruelty and suffering on others—witness the cruel and cynical way in which he tolerated perhaps half a million deaths in his own country during the long Iran-Iraq war. Nor does he appear to care a fig for the force of world opinion; if he did, he would not have flouted no fewer than 12 United Nations resolutions.

My argument was put very well by Albert Wohlstetter in a recent edition of *The Wall Street Journal*. He said:

"Saddam is likely to tolerate the pain the embargo will inflict primarily on his civil society longer than the domestic

and international coalition would bear the high political and economic costs of insisting on his getting out without compromise."

Nor should we forget, when trying to assess the rights and wrongs of the issue, the way in which the Iraqi president has ruthlessly and cynically shifted his ground in his attempts to justify the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait—a point made very well earlier by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Let me give two examples. Saddam Hussein has for a long time led a secular dictatorship in Iraq, yet we now hear from him and his spokesmen the rhetoric of Islamic holy war. Saddam invaded Kuwait palpably for economic and material reasons; yet he is now trying to claim that he did it only for the sake of the Palestinian cause. Each of those claims should be treated with the contempt that it deserves.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): It seems to me, and to many academic analysts of the middle-eastern problem, that what Saddam Hussein cares about most is Arab public opinion, and that, if he is allowed to walk away from this crisis having seen off the entire world by way of the United Nations force, he will be an unstoppable engine for Arab nationalism in the years to come and will be very much strengthened.

Mr. Forman: My hon. Friend has made a good point. In the psychological warfare that has been taking place in the last few months, there is clearly an important division between the views of the Governments of many Arab states and the views of the street, as it were. Saddam Hussein is plainly aware of the advantages that he thinks there are for him in playing a demagogic part.

Security Council resolution 678 clearly authorised the use of force by the United Nations coalition. It mentioned the date of 15 January in the hope of concentrating Saddam Hussein's mind. It may still achieve that, but deadlines postponed are deadlines undermined. Delay could fatally damage the credibility of the United Nations' position, and bolster Saddam's confidence and prospects.

Today, the choice between peace and war still lies essentially with Saddam Hussein. In a little while there may be no effective choice, for the reasons that I have given. That will obviously mean a bad outcome for the people of Kuwait, and also for those of Iraq. It will be a setback in the search for a durable settlement in the long-standing Arab-Israeli dispute, and it will probably make the building of new security structures in the whole middle-east region more difficult.

Yet, if it does come to war, the House can best make its contribution by speaking as much as possible with one voice in support of the United Nations and the principles of collective security—and, if necessary, in support of our magnificent troops, if and when they have to go into battle.

8.19 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Democracies do not easily resort to war. Government, Parliament and people have first to be persuaded that the use of force is right and that it has become unavoidable. Although very different views have been expressed in today's debate, that should not subtract from the large area of agreement that exists on both sides of the House. First, we are clear that we are dealing with an act of naked aggression. Kuwait and its people have been attacked, occupied and cruelly treated for no reason other than that Kuwait is rich, small and virtually helpless against the armed might of its overpowering neighbour.

There have been many acts of aggression since the foundation of the United Nations 45 years ago. However, what has happened in Kuwait is unique in two respects. First, the Security Council of the United Nations is united in its insistence that Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to get away with his conquest, that he must unconditionally withdraw his forces from the whole of Kuwait and that the lawful Government of that country should be re-established. Secondly, it is the first time since 1945 that an aggressor state has sought to change not just the Government of another country or rectify its borders or impose penalties but to destroy and annex the victim nation. That is what Saddam Hussein has attempted to do.

Both sides of the House agree that this relapse into the lawlessness of the 1930s must be halted and that the aggressor must be compelled to withdraw. The House has agreed that action should be taken only with the full authority of the United Nations. My right hon. Friends the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Foreign Secretary have from the start rightly insisted that there should be clear United Nations authorisation for every measure against aggression. While all parts of the House ardently wish that a solution can be found by a combination of resolute diplomacy backed up by an economic blockade, it is agreed that the military option must be available. The only point of dispute—it is a serious point—that has arisen is not about the use of force but when it is right for that option to be exercised. That argument is finely balanced. There are people of considerable reputation and experience in this country and this House, and in the United States and both Houses of Congress, who have taken the view that it is workable and preferable to maintain the blockade until Saddam Hussein is compelled to withdraw.

I shall not rehearse all the arguments for and against, but I want to add two considerations that in my mind have tilted the balance. First, we all know that on 29 November the Security Council authorised the use of "all necessary means", including force, if Saddam Hussein had not withdrawn by 15 January. Of course, it has been said that that is not a precise ultimatum and that there is no immediate resort to arms from midnight tonight. However, having pronounced a date, the authority of the United Nations is now committed and every day and every week that passes from today will lead to the erosion of United Nations' authority and to mounting tension throughout the middle east and the world.

Secondly, I am persuaded that Hussein means war and wants war. There have been numerous chances for him to avoid a clash of arms and I shall not rehearse them all, but his attitude and commitment cannot be doubted by anyone who watched and heard reports of the UN Secretary-General's visit to Baghdad. The Secretary-General of the United Nations was kept waiting for six hours and then lectured by the aggressor. No wonder Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar put his head in his hands and said that there is little room left for diplomacy. If the French can bring off a last minute coup without loss of credibility to the United Nations' position, like everyone else in the House I would welcome it. However, I do not believe that it will be any more successful than all the other attempts that have been made and all the other missions to Baghdad

[Mr. Peter Shore]

that have taken place. Those who invest their hopes in an economic blockade and believe that it will suffice have to face those facts.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon, but he knows that I am under great restraint.

There is, I recognise, a minority view in the House and in the country which was demonstrated in considerable numbers on Saturday in Trafalgar square. There are those who have persuaded themselves that the issue is not about Iraq annexing and invading Kuwait but about American concern for the supply of oil. I find that absurd. It is a paradox that the two nations of the industrial world—Britain and America—who have or could easily obtain their own supplies of oil have been most active in organising the military resistance to Saddam Hussein. Far from being the selfish pursuit of United Kingdom and United States oil supplies, it is because we know from our experience in 1974 and 1979 that it is the world economy, including western Europe, eastern Europe, Japan and still more the non-oil developing countries, that will be most grievously affected that we are concerned that the price of oil should not be driven up and that supplies should not be intercepted as they were so tragically in 1974.

There are those who have deceived themselves or are deceived by Hussein's propaganda that there is a direct link between his aggression in Kuwait and the occupation of the west bank by Israeli troops. Not one Iraqi has been killed or injured in the struggle for Palestinian self-government, but hundreds of thousands of casualties have been inflicted upon others and upon themselves by Iraqi internal repression, by its vicious use of force against its own Kurds, by its eight-year war against Iran and, most recently, its cruel conquest of Kuwait. No one with any knowledge of recent middle eastern history and United Nations interventions there can possibly believe that the unacceptable situation on the west bank arose from a simple act of Israeli aggression or that the Arab nations have accepted what is required of them under Security Council resolution 242.

If—in the next few days or, at most, the next few weeks—war proves unavoidable, it will not be a war waged for imperialist greed or a selfish desire to corner the oil supply of the Gulf but a war for the central purpose for which the United Nations was founded. It will be a war against aggression and to establish the rule of international law and the authority of the United Nations. It will be a war to rescue the damaged and abused people of Kuwait. There can be no crocodile tears about that. They have been damaged, ravaged and abused. It will be a war in which the sacrifices made by those directly involved will earn and deserve the gratitude of their fellow citizens and the world community.

8.27 pm

Sir Richard Luce (Shoreham): This is a sombre occasion against a background in which we may in a short time ask our service men to risk their lives for their country. It is right that every viewpoint reflected in the Chamber today should be heard and treated with respect. We have heard a great variety of views. I agree wholeheartedly with the views expressed by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who has injected a sense of reality in the debate when we had sensed a degree of self-delusion about what is happening in Iraq under the leadership of Saddam Hussein.

We are facing one of the most challenging post-war tests for the United Nations and for all the 30 or so countries involved in the military force in the middle east. It is a unique opportunity for the United Nations to re-establish international law and order in the middle east.

It is nearly six months since the invasion took place. We are entitled to ask ourselves at this stage what evidence is available to suggest to us that Saddam Hussein may in the near future withdraw peacefully from Kuwait. If we examine that question, it is hard to believe that he will do so. One has only to look at his position. He has abused human rights in Kuwait and has decimated the country. One has only to look at the firm entrenchment of his massive forces around Kuwait and his refusal to accept Kuwait's right to exist. Over the past five and a half months he has refused to accept Kuwait's right to exist as an independent nation. He has refused to budge one inch in discussions with several leaders of the western world. His rhetoric is extreme and becomes more extreme and more provocative, and he invokes God to his cause. Despite the fact that many people suggest that he wishes to do so, he has made no attempt to save face. In the past few days, he showed utter contempt for the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In doing so, he treated the United Nations and the rest of the world with contempt. He appears to dismiss, with contempt, the wider consequences of his actions, such as the flow of thousands of refugees from his country, the suffering that that has caused and its effect on the neighbouring country of Jordan. His actions affect world oil prices, which in turn affect the economies of the third world and eastern Europe, which are struggling to achieve economic development and a better standard of life. That shows that the long-held fears of other Gulf states—that Suddam Hussein and Iraq pose a threat to their independence—are justified.

Saddam Hussein's record gives us no sense of hope. Throughout most of his presidency, he has been in conflict of one kind or another; for example, the treatment of his own people and the Kurds, and the Iran-Iraq war, in which at least 100,000 Iraqis and 250,000 Iranians were killed. That was of no benefit to his people or to anybody in the middle east.

It is right to respect the views of those who say that if we allowed sanctions a little longer to work they would have their effect. We must examine that carefully. I have found no evidence to suggest that by prolonging this in the hope that sanctions will have their effect Saddam Hussein will withdraw. If he does not withdraw against the background of the past few weeks and the deadline of 15 January imposed by the United Nations, he is not likely to withdraw in the foreseeable future. In addition, we must remember the world's experience of sanctions being imposed in the 1930s and the post-war years.

Mr. Winnick: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, if Saddam Hussein wanted to avoid war, even at this late hour he would have made it clear that he accepted the French proposals in outline? Is he aware that there has been no response to those proposals from Baghdad today? It is quite clear that he wants war.

Sir Richard Luce: If that is so, it is simply further evidence, and the House deludes itself if it thinks that he is likely to change his mind at the last moment, although we must all pray that he does.

We are faced with the prospect that we may need to liberate Kuwait—"liberate" is the most important word—thereby giving greater hope and protection to the smaller states of the world and the interests of international order. There are no precise historic parallels, but we must learn the lessons of the 1930s and the history of Czechoslovakia. If we do not act positively now, the danger of war at a later stage is that much greater.

On 28 November 1988, an Arab leader said in a speech to Arab lawyers:

"An Arab country does not have the right to occupy another Arab country—God forbid, if Iraq should deviate from the right path, we would want Arabs to send their arms to put things right."

Saddam Hussein made that speech. It is right that he should heed his words now, or pay the price that he anticipated. If he refuses to do so, we shall find ourselves near the time when we must liberate Kuwait. In so doing, it must be right that we should let the world know that, in the aftermath of the withdrawal from or the liberation of Kuwait, the United Nations, Britain and the other nations participating in the forces there are ready to work with the forces of moderation in the middle east to help to construct a more stable middle east. Britain's past role in the middle east has been singularly important. We helped to create Iraq and Israel and to protect the Gulf states. We have a heavy responsibility and duty on our shoulders to work to create good from tragedy.

8.36 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Many states and many individuals have been involved in the process that finally took Saddam Hussein into Kuwait. I want to make it perfectly plain that we believe that in the final analysis one person will decide for war or peace—Saddam Hussein.

I shall quote from a bulletin called "Voice of the Arab World", which is produced by a British organisation. It produced an intelligence report in December that illustrates my point about several people being involved in the process that brought us to the present situation. It says:

"File Five: Washington and Whitehall policy up to 25 July.

The Americans are not the only ones who at one time or another 'took' to Saddam Hussein. A former British ambassador to Baghdad, during his time there, escorted David Mellor, then British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, in to see the president. The ambassador said later: 'It was a very sympathetic, encouraging meeting. Iraq was one of Britain's most valued trading customers. She remained the stalwart enemy of Iran. Add that background to the buoyant, self-confidence of Mellor and you have the ingredients for a cordial meeting between two interesting and intelligent men.'"

The article points out that, while the Iraqis were massing on the Kuwaiti border—apparently the CIA told Washington of that, but it either could not or did not want to hear—

"the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie met Saddam on 25 July at a time when his tanks were lined up on the border. Her recorded words were: 'The United States has no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts like your border disagreement with Kuwait.' The ambassador thereby emphasised to Saddam an U.S. 'hands off' policy in the Arab Gulf. She pressed on to make two other points: 'I have been instructed by Secretary of State Baker to emphasise and underscore this message to you. I am under instructions from President Bush to seek better relations with Iraq.'".

I draw the House's attention to the word "conflicts" in the statement made by the US ambassador to Saddam Hussein. Many people believe that that was the green light for the border dispute and that the real problem is that Saddam Hussein went beyond the border that was in dispute. Whatever contribution other people may have made to the stimulation of his ambitions, ideas or false information, Saddam Hussein is the person who will decide for war or peace.

I have not evaded or avoided the possibility of military force being employed against Saddam Hussein. Nor am I sanguine about the amount of time that is available to us. It is a purely personal judgment, but I believe that if he is still in possession of Kuwait after Ramadan there will be no prospect of getting him out. If we are honest, we are all aware that the coalition which gathered around the United States and the United Kingdom is shaky and may not last long.

Are we at the final moment? Are we at the point when we can conclude that there is no alternative, barring unleashing force against Saddam Hussein? The Scottish National party and I believe that we are not. Earlier this afternoon, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) mentioned President Kennedy and the Cuban missile crisis. The important formula for Kennedy was, "Never put your adversary in a corner that he cannot come out of. Always leave him some means of escape." That has not happened in our relations with Iraq over this problem.

I have just been passed a note saying that the French initiative has totally collapsed, which I very much regret. I do not want to go into whether it collapsed because of problems in the Security Council or because Saddam Hussein said he did not want anything to do with it. I am not in a position to relay that information to hon. Members.

It is a great tragedy that the French initiative was not picked up immediately it became known because it had two important elements, one of which was withdrawal. A BBC translation of the initiative states that its purpose is

"To invite Iraq to announce the intention of withdrawal without further delay. The intention to withdraw to a scheduled calendar and begin massive and immediate retreat".

I disagree with the Prime Minister, who said this afternoon that the wording undermined the United Nations' resolutions. It does nothing of the kind.

The second element of the French initiative was a call for a middle east peace conference. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary and the Government will retort that the concession of a peace conference would give some success to an aggressor. I read the Foreign Secretary's article last week in *The Scotsman* and his speeches and those of the Prime Minister. They talk as though some great, sacrosanct moral imperative is involved.

International affairs have nothing to do with morality; they are founded on state interest and the practical limits of power that can be applied in a given situation. That is why the events in East Timor did not produce the response made to the Kuwait invasion. That is why Lebanon could be invaded by Syria and Israel without a similar response. That is why we have had diplomatic rapprochement with Syria, which not long ago was a terrorist state. That is why

[Mr. Jim Sillars]

tonight all we can do is wring our hands about the Baltic states rather than urge the United Nations to send a peacekeeping force to intervene.

If people want to move nearer home on the issue of state interests and the contradiction with morality, let them remember what the House did in respect of the Falklands and compare that with what we did in respect of Hong Kong where, because of our perceived state interests and domestic interests, we were willing to allocate 3·5 million Hong Kong Chinese to a regime which shot young students dead in a square in Peking.

Hon. Members say that the United Nations charter is extremely important and that we will go to the end to defend it. Let us take a hypothetical situation, which could become a reality—the Ukraine, where a range of people have always argued that in no circumstances is the Ukraine other than an independent area which should never have been taken into the Soviet Union. The Ukraine has a seat in the United Nations. What happens if they declare their independence and invoke the charter? Everyone knows that no peacekeeping force would be sent, because of the practicalities of the limitations on power.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I very much admire the hon. Gentleman. This is one of the best speeches that I have heard this evening, not least because I did not get to make mine in this, the third of the Gulf debates. So magnificent a speech is it that I am bound to ask the hon. Gentleman a question. I shall go into the Lobby to vote against a war and against the Government. Will the hon. Gentleman and the Scottish National party be there with me?

Mr. Sillars: I shall deal with that point when I come to the end of my speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] I am not subject to the 10-minute rule.

Mr. Cryer: Say, "Yes, I will" or "Yes, we will."

Mr. Sillars: I shall answer the question put by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) at the end of my remarks.

I want to discuss the issue in terms of the reality of state interests. State interests are involved with the west. If Kuwait were noted for its wheat and not its oil, there would be no crisis and no army. Is it really in the best interests of the west to have war before every aspect of diplomacy is exhausted? That is a key question.

I want to be specific about Palestine. I have heard people say that there is no linkage, and I would not pretend that Saddam Hussein went into Kuwait to promote the Palestinian issue to the top of the world agenda—of course he did not. But he has now introduced the Palestinian issue. He has opened up a possible avenue of escape for himself. Bearing in mind the Kennedy dictum, should we open up that avenue even further to allow him to escape?

Some people say that there is no link, but anyone who knows anything about the middle east knows that the Palestinian issue is a great current that wholly determines, shapes and forms the political climate of the whole middle east. Perhaps it is put better than I can put it if I quote Patrick Cockburn in an article in *The Independent* today. Referring to linkage, he said:

"The difficulty is that the security problems of the Middle East are both linked. The fact that the Iraqis did not originally invade Kuwait on behalf of the Palestinians does not alter this. From the first days after the invasion, Palestinians on the West Bank and in their diaspora throughout the Arab world supported Iraq because they, more than anybody else in the Middle East, have most to gain from a change in the balance of power in the region."

There is linkage whether we like it or not. All Arab attitudes have been formed by the events of 1948, 1967 and 1973—that is the Palestinian issue.

There are risks. Suppose that we get an agreement and a diplomatic move which allows Saddam Hussein to retreat and he becomes some sort of hero—partial loser but also partial winner. Risks are involved, but they must be balanced against the other risks inherent in the consequences of war unleashed in the middle east. All major conflicts generate death and destruction, but they also whip up political shock waves which knock over previous political structures. Nothing is ever the same after a war. This war will release a shock wave in a region littered with regimes lacking legitimacy in terms of popular support—a region in spiritual, intellectual and political turmoil, one of the most unstable in the world.

For those reasons, we do not believe that we should go to war until the exhaustion of every diplomatic effort has been proved.

I end by replying to the hon. Member for Hillhead. At business questions yesterday I said that it is a disgrace that this place is being forced to vote on a war and peace issue, with all its complexities—not black and white but shades of grey in between—on a technical motion on the Adjournment. If we vote for the motion with the Government, they will be able to claim that we support them and the leader of the Labour party will be able to claim that we support his war aims which go far beyond those of the United Nations. We cannot go into that Lobby subject to that interpretation. The problem of going into the Lobby with the hon. Member for Hillhead is that we do not agree with some of the things that he and his hon. Friends have said——

Mr. Galloway: No war in the Gulf.

Mr. Sillars: No. The hon. Gentleman must take on board the fact that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is very unparliamentary.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Gentleman must take on board the fact that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield has been arguing that in no circumstances can one apply force to Saddam Hussein in Kuwait. We do not agree with that, so we cannot join those hon. Members in the Lobby. It would have been far better if we had had substantive motions which could have been amended and on which we could have voted. We will not be manipulated by the Government or by the Opposition Front Bench or by other hon. Members.

8.50 pm

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): I am somewhat reluctant to intervene in the trials and tribulations of Opposition Members. I hope that the House will calm down and will get back to the subject. Incidentally, it would be no bad thing if the House got back a little to the principles and morals involved as well. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) would not expect me to agree with most of what he said. He took me and the

House around the world so quickly that we are all dazed geographically and politically by his various examples, apart from being dazed by the trials and tribulations.

I should like to think that the hon. Gentleman may be right in believing that we have not yet reached the final moment, but I fear that he is wrong. I was naive enough —I said so publicly as well as privately—to feel that there would be an Iraqi withdrawal at the last minute. I based that view on the fact that Saddam Hussein was not a complete fool. He has conducted himself in a clever and almost crafty way in playing the various forces that have been ranged against him. I thought that Saddam Hussein would not risk the destruction of his country, and the death of so many of his armed forces and of his people. I thought that he would go for the so-called "nightmare scenario", which means a partial withdrawal, and which has scarcely been mentioned in the debate. I believed that he might partially withdraw, but might keep the disputed part of the Rumaila oilfield and the islands. We may even yet have to address that question.

I and other hon. Members in the debate are extremely pessimistic. Saddam Hussein appears to have decided that he can better survive as leader of his country—bearing in mind the fate that has awaited Iraqi leaders historically if they got it wrong—after a defeat and after having fought than after a withdrawal from which he gets little or nothing. That is sad, so I agree with the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) that that man intends to fight. We must, of course, try for peace and we must go down various avenues for the extra mile. Some of my hon. Friends may agree that we have been down a lot of avenues and a lot of extra miles.

The present position is that all the initiatives are as nothing. My own pessimism began when I learned of the deplorable way in which the Secretary-General of the United Nations was treated in Baghdad. On the tapes tonight, we heard—this is quite apart from arguing the question of linkage, with which I do not agree—that after the French had put linkage as part of their terms, the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas said that he had had no tangible response from Baghdad. That is the present position.

The realities are simply these. We are not dealing with what might have been, with whether we could have got something different or with whether, if we had been in charge, we could have done something different. We are faced with an illegal and brutal invasion. We are faced with a second invasion of a different country in a decade. We must face the fact that if nothing is done here, there will be further invasions.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) put the argument well. Against Iraq is ranged the most powerful military force since the second world war. It involves the United States, ourselves and a number of others. It also has the full backing of a world body—the United Nations. To back off now would mean that there would be no world authority left. It would be open season for every dictator and terrorist in the world.

I want to describe what I believe would happen if we backed off. The future would be even more precarious than the future that could await us should there be a war. First, Iraq will take over the military and, increasingly, the political leadership of the Arab middle east and there could never be a more unscrupulous and unprincipled leader. Secondly, the Gulf states are always vulnerable and they would collapse unless we stayed there virtually indefinitely. That is not on and would not be a good thing anyway.

Thirdly, Israel will undoubtedly be involved in a further middle east war if Saddam Hussein has his way in the present crisis. Fourthly, the forces of Arab moderation and balance will effectively be demoralised. Egypt and Syria will not chance their arm again with the west if we let them down over this, which is a very difficult position for them. Fifthly, as has been so well put recently, not only the prosperous world but the third world will increasingly become dependent on the will of dictators. Sixthly—a horrifying prospect—Iraq will become a nuclear power.

We must concentrate on the future, whether there is peace or war. It is paramount that we concentrate on gaining a solution—and it will not be easy—to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to the Palestinian position. The participation of the United States, in the same thorough and good way in which it has led the world during the present crisis, is needed increasingly on the issue, which is the rallying cry for much of the trouble throughout the region.

The region is divided between the countries which are deprived of wealth and are generally more populated and the countries that are under-populated and extremely wealthy. A more equal distribution of the oil wealth must be worked out across the Arab world.

A further point for the future is that we must establish —whether there is peace or war—a United Nations-backed, mainly Arab peacekeeping force for the area and that force will, of course, be backed by the west. We must encourage political progress in the Gulf states. Whatever can be said about those countries, the inhabitants have not in recent years faced an overwhelmingly democratic future.

Last, but not least, there must be far tighter international control of weapons supplied to these countries. They have the money to buy equipment of vast destructive power, but they have few of the skills or the maturity of government which should go with the ability and opportunity to use those weapons. We must aim for all these things in the future.

8.57 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): There has been the stench of hypocrisy about this debate, and also the stench of racism. I agree with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) who spoke about Lithuania. The British Government have said that Lithuania is a free and independent country which is not part of the USSR. The USSR has sent troops into Lithuania. Therefore, the British Government should do what it has done about Saddam Hussein, Iraq and Kuwait: it should get the United Nations to send troops to throw the Russians out of Lithuania. There is one reason why they will not do that —the colour of the Russians is different from the colour of the Iraqis and that is a fact.

I spent eight days in Iraq as leader of the peace mission organised by the British branch of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Movement. We were there to find out what the Iraqis thought because the media over here had not been putting the Iraqi point of view. If we are to believe what we hear from President Bush, our own Prime Minister and the gutter press, Saddam Hussein is a half-mad dictator—a devil who rules by brutality alone and does not care about

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his people. But the fact of the matter is that Saddam Hussein is not mad—he is ruthless, yes, but he is not mad—and he cares about his people. When I was in Baghdad, the Iraqi people told me that they had the greatest respect for Saddam Hussein. The same is true in Jordan. The reason is that Saddam Hussein has made his people feel that the Arab people should be proud of their ethnicity and race. The west takes no account of that.

President Bush says that there should be no linkage. I will tell the House about linkage. I remember when the Americans called a conference to discuss Namibia after the battle of Cuito Cuanavale, at which the South Africans were defeated by the Angolans and the Cubans. The first thing that the Americans said was that they had to have linkage: if they wanted the South Africans out of Namibia, the Cubans had to leave Angola. It had nothing to do with the issue. The Americans are nothing but a load of hypocrites if they think that we will accept the policy of no linkage.

The present situation could be resolved easily if Israel said that she was prepared to go to a conference to discuss the Palestinian issue. Why will the Israelis not do that? It is because Israel wants to maintain her expansionist policy in the middle east—and Israel is allowed to get away with that because the Americans want one power only in the region, and that power must be Israel.

I am opposed to much of what has been said tonight and to sanctions against Iraq. I think that there should be an Arab solution. If the Arabs got together without any pressure from the west, they would be able to resolve the issue. The Palestinian issue must be an integral part of any conference. I believe that there should be a discussion on secure borders for Israel, too, but I certainly feel that unless there is linkage there will be no prospect of peace in the middle east.

If there is war tomorrow, the effects on third-world countries will vastly outweigh the effects within the region. The Minister for Overseas Development has already told us that there will be no extra money for the starving millions of Africa because of the amount of money that will have to be spent on war in the Gulf. That is only one aspect. There will be hunger and starvation the like of which has never been seen before in the oil-importing countries. A report of the United Nations committee on trade and development has already stated that if the price of oil goes to $30 per barrel, $26 billion will be taken away from third-world countries and put back into the coffers of oil-producing countries, including this country. It is clear to me that the world, around America and its allies in the Gulf, is heading for war for one reason and one reason only: it wants control of the middle east.

There is also a subsidiary reason: the people involved are people of colour. I end as I began: if we are talking about white people invading a white country, United States and British forces would never be involved as they are in the Gulf today.

9.3 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): As we approach what may be the gravest turning point in post-war international history, it is right that this House of Commons should remind itself of the nature of the crisis that we face. Parallels have been drawn with other crises in which this country has been involved—with Suez, referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) and my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), and with the Falklands. Those comparisons are faulty.

Suez was a conspiracy among three countries of which Britain was one. Britain was party to an aggression that violated two United Nations General Assembly resolutions and involved a British veto of two Security Council resolutions: it was Britain against the United Nations. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), from whom we heard again today, should remember all this very well; he was the Government Chief Whip at the time and he had the responsibility of delivering a majority to sustain Anthony Eden's violation of international law. Although Suez had serious international implications, it fundamentally affected only the four countries in dispute. In Britain the Prime Minister was overthrown and the country's imperial role was ended for ever.

In the Falklands there was an act of aggression by a fascist dictatorship which, tired of negotiating what it regarded as a valid case, invaded the islands which it claimed and so violated the United Nations charter. Again, although important principles of international conduct were involved, it was a dispute between two countries, each with supporters of its case, which did not involve the United Nations directly. The solution of the dispute by the United Kingdom exercising its right of self defence under article 51 of the United Nations charter affected only the two countries involved. Argentina was expelled from the islands and the Argentine junta was ousted soon afterwards.

The Gulf crisis that we have debated throughout today is very different. Although one country has invaded and consumed another, the dispute is not simply between those two countries. Immediately after the invasion took place on 2 August, the United Nations Security Council intervened. It took a series of unprecedented measures intended to force the aggressor to disgorge his spoils. If those spoils are not disgorged, the repercussions will affect not merely Iraq and Kuwait, but the entire world community.

If the most stringent measures ever taken by the United Nations fail, the United Nations will in future be worthless as an institution created and designed to maintain international order and security. That is why we in the Labour party have been determined that the will of the United Nations must be upheld and implemented. It was a Labour Government who were involved in the creation of the United Nations 45 years ago. It is the Labour party which has a constitution requiring us to support the United Nations. We have invested too much faith and hope in that organisation to stand by and see it shattered by the recalcitrance of one country.

Ever since 2 August the Labour party has been clear in its view of how the crisis should be solved. We have based that view insistently and inextricably on support for the authority of the United Nations. It is based not on support for any individual Government, including the British Government, but on the firm rock of the United Nations. We advocated economic sanctions and naval and air blockades to enforce them. We advocated diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a peaceful solution fully within the United Nations resolutions. We said that if an option

of force was to be available to provide backing for the sanctions and the diplomacy, that option must have what in the House on 7 September I called

"the clear and unquestionable authority of the United Nations".—[*Official Report*, 7 September 1990; Vol. 177, c. 892.]

Mr. Dalyell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that some of us would be much more comfortable if, to establish the firm rock of the United Nations, we went back not to the Security Council but to the General Assembly and asked a specific question? We should ask whether it is the will of the General Assembly of the United Nations—all the member countries—that we should embark on a human and ecologically catastrophic war. If that question were put and answered, many of us would be much happier.

Mr. Kaufman: My hon. Friend is well aware that such questions are referred to the General Assembly only when the Security Council is stalemated. That is precisely what happened during Suez when the British Government's veto of two Security Council resolutions placed the matter in the hands of the General Assembly. We welcome the diplomatic efforts that have been made and are still being made. I hope that they will continue, whether they are made by France—although it appears that the latest French initiative has failed—the Yemen or anyone else who feels ready to try. But let us be clear that every diplomatic effort that has been attempted has been the initiative of the countries or international organisations united against Iraqi aggression.

It was President Bush who proposed the talks in Baghdad and Washington, which never took place, and the talks in Geneva that failed. It was the European Community that proposed talks with Tariq Aziz, which he spurned. It was a senior French emissary who went to Baghdad and it is the Prime Minister of Yemen who has gone there. It was the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who represents us all, the Security Council and the General Assembly, who went to Baghdad and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) reminded us, was left cooling his heels for six hours before Saddam Hussein deigned to meet him.

Let us be blunt. The senior statesmen and women of the world have danced attendance on Saddam Hussein while he, the initiator of the aggression, has not taken one step to resolve the situation that he has created. He has frustrated the efforts of those who have sought an outcome through diplomacy. Mr. Perez de Cuellar said, after their meeting eventually took place:

"He never mentioned the word withdrawal".

As all of us in the House agonise about how to resolve this crisis peacefully, let us be clear that the crisis could be resolved peacefully in one moment if Saddam Hussein withdrew from Kuwait and if he decided to undo what he alone did—if he simply got out. Instead, as resolution 678 puts it, he is in "flagrant contempt" of the United Nations. He says that he has no grievances, but he knows that UN resolution 660 urges that those grievances be resolved through direct negotiations between Iraq and Kuwait. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred to those negotiations today, but they can take place only if there is a Kuwait—an entity whose existence Saddam Hussein denies—and if there is a legitimate Kuwaiti Government restored to authority as resolution 661 laid down.

Saddam Hussein claims that he is concerned for the Palestinians, who indeed continue to suffer under Israeli occupation. If they continue so to suffer, Saddam Hussein must bear a full share of the responsibility, because since the House last debated the Gulf crisis, the Security Council has passed resolution 681 which, accompanied by a statement by the Security Council president, provides the basis for the international conference which Saddam Hussein says he wants to deal with the problem. The statement says that such a conference should be held at an appropriate time. It is an historic and unprecedented resolution. Not for nearly a quarter of a century has the Security Council passed a comprehensive resolution aimed at securing a middle east settlement and justice for the Palestinians.

If the Security Council's authority is flouted over 12 resolutions dealing with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, how can an appropriate time—I should like it to be very soon, for I have advocated such a conference for many years—be fixed for that conference when it can only be convened through the authority of the United Nations? If Saddam Hussein cared as much about the Palestinians as he rhetorically claims, and as much as many hon. Members genuinely care, he would immediately withdraw from Kuwait for that reason alone. However, he shows no sign of getting out. The whole of the UN awaits the decision of one man who holds all of us to ransom.

We all agree that Saddam Hussein's aggression must be reversed. What is causing anxious debate in the House and the country is how it should be done. The Labour party advocates diplomacy and we believe that that should continue as long as there is any point to it. However, diplomacy should not reward Iraq—there can be no reward for aggression—nor should it do a deal with Iraq. The Security Council resolutions insist that withdrawal must be unconditional. Diplomacy should explore, until success is reached or there is no further point, the possibilities of persuading Iraq that withdrawal is in its interests as well as in the interests of the international community.

The Labour party advocated economic sanctions. They have been in operation for 166 days. I am sure that when the United Kingdom Government embarked on those sanctions they did so in good faith. I am not sure whether the Government hoped or expected that the sanctions would succeed in 166 days or fewer, but two things are clear: first, the sanctions have had a considerable effect; secondly, they have not yet had the effect of inducing Iraq to leave Kuwait.

That sanctions have had an effect is clear from impeccable sources. By November the United States State Department had reported that 97 per cent. of Iraq's oil exports had been cut off, that imports of machinery, industrial goods, semi-finished goods and raw materials had declined by 90 per cent. and that some food prices had increased eightfold.

Mr. William Webster, director of the United States Central Intelligence Agency, gave evidence to the House of Representatives armed services committee last month when he provided further information. He said that more than 100 countries are observing sanctions, that sanctions have all but shut off Iraqi exports and that imports into Iraq have been reduced to less than 10 per cent. of the pre-invasion level. He said that many light industrial and assembly plants have been affected, as has Iraq's only tyre manufacturing plant. He revealed that sanctions have

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deprived Iraq of $1·5 billion of foreign exchange every month and that Iraq will have nearly depleted its foreign exchange reserve by the spring. He said:

"Reduced rations, coupled with rapid inflation . . . will compound the economic pressures".

He said that even with favourable weather Iraq would be able to produce less than half the grain that it needs, and that the effect of sanctions will be felt first by the Iraqi air force and then by its army.

The Iraqi industry Minister has admitted that 60 per cent. of factories are closed due to lack of spare parts or raw materials and that almost 80 per cent. of Iraqis are unemployed or under-employed.

No doubt on the basis of that or similar information, Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine, the commander in chief of United Kingdom air forces and joint commander of the British forces, stated that by the end of October —I have no reason to think that he has changed his mind since—the refinement of crude oil into aviation fuel and lubricants for tanks and other vehicles was already becoming more of a problem for Saddam Hussein. He said:

"If we can enforce the embargo more effectively life must get more difficult for him."

The air chief marshal summed up:

"We have obviously got to give several months or longer for sanctions to work. We are pinning our faith on sanctions. There is evidence they are starting to bite."

That is clearly an important view. Equally clearly, I would be the first to insist that judgments on policy must be the responsibility not of service officers, however senior or distinguished, but of elected politicians. The House should take that evidence into account. Because sanctions have not yet succeeded does not mean that they are bound to fail.

The House should take into account, too, that the date of 15 January, inserted into resolution 678, is, as the Foreign Secretary explained when the resolution was going through the Security Council,

"not . . . the date upon which military action starts"

but

"It is the date after which member states will be authorised to take action in pursuit not of their own objectives but of the specific requirements of the Security Council".—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1990; Vol. 181, col. 869-70.]

That interpretation was endorsed a week ago when President Bush stated:

"January 15 is not a date certain for the onset of armed conflict."

It was reinforced yesterday by General Brent Scowcroft, President Bush's national security adviser, who said:

"Every day we're closer to Saddam Hussein's deadline. We don't have one, but he has one."

It was with those considerations in mind that I told the House in our debate five weeks ago on 11 December:

"Stipulation of the date does not necessarily trigger the use of force on or immediately after that date. We in the Labour party repeat our position that the option of force should be invoked only after the maximum time has been given for sanctions to work".

I continued:

"We should not be hemmed in by the date of 15 January. We should not be boxed in by the compulsion of the desert timetable and the effects of the weather on the ability to wage war. If a longer haul is judged likely to achieve the effect of sanctions, we should not rely on other considerations to reject the longer haul."—[*Official Report*, 11 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. 837.]

That has been our position from the start and it remains our position today. We still hope that it will prevail.

We appreciate that as an Opposition we can warn, advise and recommend, but not decide. The prerogative of decision lies with the Government. Therefore, the question arises as to what the Labour party's attitude should be if the Government's decision is contrary to what we recommend and early use of force is decided on. Here, my judgment is very much affected by what has become of the position the Government held at the outset of the crisis.

I have reminded the House tonight that in the first of our debates on the subject on 7 September 1990 I insisted that if there was to be an option of force standing behind sanctions and diplomacy, it should have what I called, "the clear and unquestionable authority of the United Nations."

I said:

"We believe that any further operations found necessary . . . should . . . be clearly and unequivocally authorised by the United Nations."

Much of that debate in September was dominated by discussion of whether article 51 of the United Nations charter was sufficient authority for the use of military force against Iraq. I said:

"It is not enough to be able to argue a technical case under article 51"—[*Official Report*, 7 September 1990; Vol. 177, c. 892.]

That was not the Government's position at that time. The right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), opening the debate as Prime Minister, spent a large proportion of her speech advancing a view quite contrary to the view of the Labour party's spokesmen. She spoke of what she called the right of individual or collective self-defence under article 51, which she claimed was affirmed in resolution 661. She said:

"To undertake now to use no military force without the further authority of the Security Council would be to deprive ourselves of a right in international law expressly affirmed by Security Council resolution 661."

She continued:

"I have full legal authority for everything that I say on these matters, and for those reasons I am not willing to limit our legitimate freedom of action . . . My views have been approved by the topmost legal opinions that we can get." —[*Official Report*, 6 September 1990; Vol. 177, c. 737-38.]

If that had continued to be the Government's policy, I might have been in considerable difficulty tonight when contemplating my attitude to the use of force should the Government decide, as I hope they will not, to go ahead with force earlier rather than later, if at all. But what the right hon. Member for Finchley stated as the Government's policy on 6 September is no longer Government policy. That policy was abandoned in the most explicit terms on 9 November when, after talks with Mr. James Baker, the United States Secretary of State, the right hon. Lady came to Downing street as was her wont in those days and announced that she had given her approval for the United States to seek a United Nations resolution authorising military action in the Gulf.

The then Prime Minister could not have been more open about this change of policy. She declared:

"We do not believe one"—

that is, a resolution—

"is necessary for legal reasons. We already have the legal authority. The only question is how best to keep this coalition of opinion together and that, of course, we consider."

The Government changed their mind and I am glad that they did. They supported the Security Council resolution when previously they had rejected such a resolution. That

resolution went through on 29 November. It is a resolution for which the Labour party pressed and on which we insisted. We are very glad that the Government came round to our way of thinking.

We ardently believe that the option in resolution 678 ought not to be taken up until sanctions have been given a better and further chance, but if that view is rejected we have to be consistent. We must accept that such action will have been taken in accordance with a resolution for which we pressed long and hard, a resolution which is now United Nations policy embodied in that resolution.

That is why I remind the House of our long-stated view that sanctions should be persisted with over the longer haul—[HON. MEMBERS: "For how long?"] Neither the United States when it drafted the resolution nor the United Kingdom Government when they supported it wanted a deadline at all. It was inserted at the insistence of the Soviet Union. The United Nations, having slipped into the error of one deadline, ought not to slip into the error of another.

Ms. Short: I have heard my right hon. Friend say on a number of occasions that the 15 January deadline, which I considered a major error, came about at the insistence of the Soviet Union. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said today that he understood that the Soviet Union asked for that deadline because it was later than the deadline that the Americans were pressing for. This deadline is a major error in the west's strategy in the Gulf, and I should like to hear what my right hon. Friend has to say about the point made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup.

Mr. Kaufman: I can give my hon. Friend two pieces of evidence, one of which is on the record and one of which is not. I assure my hon. Friend that I obtained the latter in the past eight days on the highest and most authentic authority.

The first piece of evidence was provided by the Foreign Secretary who, in *Hansard* on 28 November, specifically confirmed that this was done on the insistence of the Soviet Union. As for the other piece of evidence, I have been told by other parties involved in the negotiations that the deadline was inserted at the insistence of the Soviet Union; and there could be no better authority for that information than those parties. If the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup disagrees, he will have to produce evidence contrary to mine, but I cannot imagine any evidence that could controvert the evidence that I have.

I say again that sanctions should be persisted with over the longer haul. I also say to the House that if the British armed forces are sent into action under the authority of resolution 678 and in accordance with an objective that we support, the Labour party will give its unswerving support to our armed forces.

On 11 December I told the House that at the end of that debate I would be voting not for the Government but for the policies that the Labour party has advocated since the invasion of Kuwait. I said that I would vote to send a signal to Saddam Hussein that the Labour party is unequivocal in its support of the United Nations.

I shall vote tonight in the same Lobby and for the same reason, not for the Government, not to urge or encourage war, but in support of the United Nations. I want Saddam Hussein to know that the Labour party is impregnable in its support for the United Nations; that the United Nations demands that Saddam Hussein leaves Kuwait and that leave Kuwait Saddam Hussein will. I pray that he leaves Kuwait peacefully.

9.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): This has been a sombre debate, rightly, because the country may stand on the edge of war and it is right that the House should look into these deeps. My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) spoke of his memories and experiences. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Morris) mentioned his family anxiety. Such speeches were deeply moving because of the personal feeling behind them.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) asked a key question about our aims if there is a war, and they are clear. They are contained in the Security Council resolutions. They are to get Iraq out of Kuwait—all of Kuwait—to restore the legitimate Government of Kuwait and to uphold in that way the collective security and authority of the United Nations. Beyond that, there is no hidden agenda. There is no intention to dismember Iraq. There is no intention to impose on Iraq a Government or, indeed, a president of our choice. We have not added to or sought to add to the requirements of the Security Council. The international community has been clear about those aims from the beginning.

I will pick up one or two of what seem to me to be the important points raised during the debate before I return to the main theme. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred, as he has done before, to his interpretation of Security Council resolution 660 and what it says about negotiation between the Kuwaitis and the Iraqis. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) picked up the point, as did the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) just now.

Resolution 660 was passed on 2 August, the day on which the Iraqis moved into Kuwait and before they had secured all its territory. We and all members of the Security Council wanted to see negotiations between the Government of Kuwait in Kuwait and the Government of the invading force, just as we wanted the invading force to withdraw, but it is a very different matter to expect the Kuwaiti Government in exile to take on the full burden of negotiating with the Iraqis on the restitution of their rightful territory, particularly with a Government, one of whose Ministers says that there is no such thing as Kuwait.

Of course there is an agenda. My right hon. Friend is right. There is an agenda between those two countries, not least because it is certain that the Kuwaitis will want substantial reparations from Iraq. But these negotiations can only take place between two Governments who control their respective states. Therefore, before that part of resolution 660 becomes realistic, we must bring about the return of the territory in Kuwait to its legitimate Government.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Sir R. Luce) mentioned in passing the position of Jordan. I was there two days ago. A large part of Jordan's economy is theatened or being damaged by the sanctions against Iraq which the Jordanian Government are now attempting to implement. Two days ago, I again had talks with the king, crown prince and Ministers of Jordan, and I came away

[Mr. Douglas Hurd]

feeling sympathy for their predicament. I hope that they find a way through. None of my right hon. and hon. Friends nor I agree with the political analysis that the king has adopted throughout the crisis, but the Jordanians seek compliance with the Security Council resolutions. Their standing and place in the region has been seriously damaged. I and other right hon. and hon. Members have talked about that situation to others of Jordan's traditional friends in the region, and we would like to see the resumption of the traditional friendly links between Jordan and countries such as Egypt and the Gulf states.

Mr. Nellist: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps I can get on a bit.

Mr. Heath: Perhaps I may return to my right hon. Friend's point about paragraph 3 of resolution 660. In fact, the Kuwaiti royal family left Kuwait before the Iraqis went in and are now established in Saudi Arabia as the Government of Kuwait, so there is nothing to prevent the Kuwaiti Government from negotiating with the Iraqi Government. To start picking and choosing paragraphs from United Nations resolutions at this stage is neither justifiable nor tolerable.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that the House considers that it is justifiable to expect a Government in exile—whether in London 50 years ago or in Saudi Arabia now—to start negotiating with the people occupying their territories.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) spoke, as he has done before, of the horrors to come if there is fighting. All fighting is a horrible business, of course, but the right hon. Gentleman has been uniquely inaccurate in his past prophesies. In 1982, he predicted that any opposed landing in the Falklands would inflict intolerable casualties on the Falkland islanders, and that the result of a successful British action would be that the Argentine Government would be replaced by a regime far more nationalistic, and far more determined to secure revenge, than that of General Galtieri.

I could not check the accuracy of all the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East as he spoke of some things that I knew not of, but when he remarked on matters about which I do know, he was wrong. In particular, he was wrong about the Soviets, and about the position that the European Ministers adopted in Brussels yesterday when they all—including the French—decided that the Community and its member states would regretfully have to conclude that the conditions for a new European initiative do not exist as of this moment. I fear that that has proved to be the correct conclusion.

Mr. Nellist: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Hurd: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Many right hon. and hon. Members raised the question of the Arab-Israel situation and linkage. Once the aggression against Kuwait is reversed and Iraq is out of Kuwait, it will be possible and necessary to return to the other problems of the middle east. Everyone concerned —President Bush, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and the European Community—have made that clear.

We have been working on a solution to the Arab-Israel problem since the foundation of the state of Israel, and even long before then. In recent years, the Security Council has charted the way. It is a conflict of competing claims and rights, and not exactly comparable with any other problem. The territories in question were occupied by Israel in 1967 as a result of an attack planned against Israel which it pre-empted. We do not agree with Israel's occupation of those territories, and we do not believe that it provides a legitimate basis for Israel's security, but the historical basis for it is different from that of the Gulf crisis, and the Security Council resolutions are also different.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall continue with this point and then I will give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I shall press for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, balanced by Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure borders. Resolution 338 called for direct negotiations.

For many years there was no general Arab readiness to accept either resolution, but we have repeatedly stated that recent steps by the PLO and the Arab League have placed the onus upon Israel to respond. We support self-determination for the Palestinians. We support a direct dialogue between Israel and representative Palestinians, and we believe that an international conference is the right forum for negotiations between all parties concerned, at the right time. That is our policy.

Saddam Hussein has not helped forward this policy, and he has not helped forward the peace processes—he has hindered it and held them up. As the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) made clear, Saddam Hussein did not invade Kuwait to help the Palestinians; he invaded Kuwait to help himself. It is absurd to argue that one can end one occupation by imposing another.

I should just tell the House that—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Would the Foreign Secretary carry on, please?

Mr. Hurd: Iraq's standing in the Arab-Israel question is that of one Arab state, not as a spokesman for all Arab states. That point was made clearly and insistently to me by the Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Saud, when I was in the area the other day.

Iraq's recent aggression makes it much more difficult, for the time being, to work towards a settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute, but once Iraq is out of Kuwait we shall have to return to this, and we shall have to bring fresh energy and imagination to the issue. Fresh thinking will be needed from the Arab states, which are still technically at war with Israel, by the Palestinians, by Israel and by the international community.

I entirely agree, and I am sure that most hon. Members would agree, that the suffering and injustice brought about by this problem must spur us on.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I agree with the Foreign Secretary that it would be wrong to link the two issues, but no matter how hon. Members or people in the west may feel, the majority of people in the Arab world see a linkage, if only because of our failure to deal just as efficiently and effectively in international law with the Palestinian question. If the right hon. Gentleman does not like the word linkage, what about the term parallel endeavours?

Since Iraq invaded Kuwait, 72 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli defence forces. As the Foreign Secretary knows, last Wednesday four Palestinians were deported from the west bank and Gaza. Until we deal with those issues just as effectively and firmly—that is in no way linkage, but a parallel endeavour—people will not accept that we are serious about the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: As the Leader of the Opposition said, by invading Kuwait Saddam Hussein has held up and prevented any possible progress on the Arab-Israel question. That is the fact of the matter. Once he is out of Kuwait, as I have said, we shall have to return to the subject with vigour and with fresh ideas.

I have been asked about the French proposal——

Mr. Nellist: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

The Prime Minister dealt with the French proposal in his opening speech. The Security Council has been meeting informally today—the last day of this important chapter in its history. Four months after the original invasion, the original resolution 678 gave Saddam Hussein a further 45 days to decide whether he would comply. The Security Council and the Secretary-General have done their utmost to remind Saddam Hussein that 45 days have now passed by issuing a solemn appeal to him. That seemed to us to be a wholly sensible step. What we have not wanted to do is to suggest, even obliquely, that the time frame set by the Security Council should be extended, or that we have been converted by Saddam Hussein, in the context of his aggression, to the idea of an international conference on the Arab-Israel problem. The Arab members of the coalition would resent that fiercely, as has been made clear to me, and I cannot conceive of Israel's attending a conference convoked in such a way and under such auspices.

That said, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) that there is no case for harshness towards this proposal. What is necessary is for realism to be applied to it. We have been working all day in New York to achieve an appeal to Saddam Hussein around which all Security Council members can rally. We believe that a straightforward appeal of that kind would be the right course for the Secretary-General and the Security Council today.

This morning, we put forward certain British ideas to try to find the basis for such an appeal. I have just received a message from our representative in New York to the effect that the Security Council has agreed that the Secretary-General will make a statement, which he has said will fully reflect the Security Council resolutions, within an hour or two. If that proves to be right, it would seem a sensible end to the day's work.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), who asked me to. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nellist: I am not sure why hon. Members find that so funny. What is the Secretary of State frightened of? Why will he not answer the question?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the Foreign Secretary was giving way to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon).

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I thank the Foreign Secretary for giving way.

If war breaks out—in a very few hours—I believe that the right hon. Gentleman, his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Bush will have been total and abject failures. They will have failed the whole world, and in particular the people of the middle east. They are all failed politicians—wimps—and they will go down in history as the people who caused blood to be spilt by thousands in the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: I shall answer that point by describing where I think the real danger lies. Before I do so, however, I will fulfil the promise given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that I would say something further about sanctions.

It is perfectly reasonable to ask—as many have asked themselves and the Government—whether sanctions should not be given longer to take effect. Since sanctions were imposed, Iraqi oil exports have dwindled to virtually nothing, and Iraq is now cut off from its sources of external finance. Sanctions are not completely watertight, but there is no doubt that the flow of goods to Iraq is a very small proportion of that before the invasion of Kuwait. At the time of the invasion, Iraq had considerable food stocks. Although there is some rationing, consumption remains fairly high, and there is no reason to suppose that Iraqis face short-term difficulty in that regard. Steps have been taken by a dictatorial regime to force an increase in agricultural output.

Industry is also prepared for a long haul. As has been pointed out, many factories have closed as a result of deliberate action by the Iraqi Government to divert resources to the military sector. We believe that the key sectors of industry are likely on this basis to continue operations for a long time, and the Government have the option of closing down more factories without disruption and without affecting essential services.

I come now to the key question—that of the military. President Saddam Hussein has systematically built up a large arsenal in recent years. It is therefore hardly surprising that we see no signs that he is at present short of spares. We believe that that arsenal provides him with so much hardware that he can still afford to capitalise if necessary.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East has studied the matter carefully, and will appreciate this point. One test is the rate of sorties by the air force. It has not declined, which suggests that Iraq does not see a need to reduce sorties in order to conserve spare parts. Similar is true of the operations of the ground forces such as tanks and artillery. Prodigious quantities of hardware are deployed in Kuwait and Iraq, together with ammunition, and we see no evidence that the imposition of sanctions has so far affected those elements. We believe that Saddam Hussein could hold out for a long time without dramatically affecting his fighting arm, and that is the critical point.

Mr. Healey: My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) quoted the evidence given by the head of the CIA, Mr. Webster, a few weeks ago to the American Congress when he stated that the air capacity of Iraq would begin to be affected by about Easter, that other weapons would begin to be affected in

[Mr. Healey]

six or nine months and that there would be a serious impact on the military capability by next autumn. Does the Secretary of State agree or disagree with Mr. Webster?

Mr. Hurd: I have given the House an up-to-date—as of this week—assessment of the situation. Mr. Webster's evidence was given some time ago. I do not believe that there would be a wide divergence of assessment and I have given the House the best assessment that we have.

Mr. Healey *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: The question that the right hon. Member for Leeds, East has not tackled is whether sanctions will get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait. There is no doubt that if they were left in place for a long time, they would impose substantial hardships on the Iraqi people, but that is what they have been used to enduring for years. Saddam Hussein does not care for the suffering of his people. He has proved that in the war against Iran in which 350,000 people died. He is preoccupied with his own position and with the strength of his military machine. Will the right hon. Member for Leeds, East accept that there is no evidence that sanctions will have a decisive effect on Saddam Hussein's armed forces in the foreseeable future? That is the key point. Unless we wish to delude ourselves, we must face the possibility that sanctions, no matter how long they are applied, will not force Saddam Hussein to withdraw. They will not achieve such a decisive rundown of his military machine that he will leave Kuwait.

People could argue that we should put that proposition to the test if waiting were cost-free, but it is not. As time passes, it will be easy for the world outside to forget what has happened. Saddam Hussein has taken a sovereign nation, a member of the United Nations, and wiped it off the map. Its people have fled or been murdered and we estimate that of the 700,000 Kuwaitis who lived in Kuwait before August, only 250,000 remain there. If we let this pass, Kuwait may never be restored. Theoretically, the military option may still be open to us in six or 12 months but, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East knows, in practice it may be eroded. Time passes quickly in these matters and familiarity with a tragedy can easily blunt the outrage. If we do not take action within the foreseeable future, assuming that a peaceful outcome is prevented, it may be that the conditions for action will not again be favourable.

I fear that we must accept the possibility that by the time we looked again at the military option Kuwait would have become just another item on the international agenda. In fact, the will and the means might not come together again. If we blink now, how could we expect Saddam Hussein to believe in a military option again? To those who say, as many do and as many will be tempted to do in coming months, "Let sanctions work", I say that I fear that that is not a safe option.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I shall give way in a minute.

In a year or so, we may find that sanctions have not worked, that Saddam Hussein is still in Kuwait after more plunder, torture and killings and that, in practice, the military option no longer exists. I do not believe that any sensible hon. Member would regard that outcome as acceptable or safe.

Miss Lestor: If the policy of sanctions has been abandoned, when was that decision taken?

Mr. Hurd: It has not been abandoned; it is in full force. As the right hon. Member for Gorton emphasised, it was right to pursue it. We must seriously assess its prospects, not in terms of hardship for the Iraqi people but in terms of so crippling Iraqi's military machine that it has to get out of Kuwait. I have given the House the best assessment that I can of that situation.

Mr. Benn *rose*——

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to a close.

Several hon. Members, particularly those who will vote against the motion, have drawn our attention to many other acts of injustice and repression in the world, some of which are continuing and some of which have defied solution before. Of course it is right that we must continue to look for answers to problems in Cambodia, Lebanon and Palestine, with which I have dealt, and in Lithuania. On 2 August, we were faced with a clear, abrupt act of aggression. I cannot understand how it can be argued that that act of aggression should go unredressed because there are other injustices in the world. We should not forget Kuwait simply because we have other grievous problems to remember—a point made notably by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore).

In all this swell of argument, the essential point is more clearly understood in this country than elsewhere. We must ask, for what cause are we justified in asking young men and women to put lives—their own and others—at risk in war? The answer is safety—the safety of this country and of the international community, of which we are a part. The threat from Iraq to this country is not of invasion or direct bombing, although it might come from terrorism, but if we want a safe world we must accept the principle that a small, peaceable state cannot be obliterated, that aggression must be reversed and that, in part, our safety depends on the safety of others. We have learnt that lesson the hard way several times in this century. We must not only accept the point in argument but act on it. Everybody respects the pacifist position, but pacifists would accept that their position involves accepting, or at least putting up with, acts of aggression and letting them succeed.

Of course we must try peaceful action first. We have used peaceful means for more than five months, and for six weeks Saddam Hussein has known that from tonight members of the United Nations are authorised to use force to secure compliance with the Security Council's resolutions. The right hon. Member for Gorton rightly said that the most striking fact is that Saddam Hussein has refused to discuss, let alone admit, the need for withdrawal. I expected it to be otherwise. I thought that in the past week or so there would have been a flow of clever proposals from Baghdad, designed to divide the coalition and to confuse the issues. I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) said about that. I thought that there would be proposals for partial withdrawal—or for withdrawal, but not yet —or that Saddam Hussein would pounce on one of the compromises floated before him in such profusion. That has not been so, and this evening, as I understand it, he has shown no interest—rather the reverse—in the latest

French idea. He knows the range of forces against him, and he knows that if he fully withdraws he will not be attacked and that we have not added to the requirements of the Security Council. Unless there is some sudden change, which we can only guess at but cannot, I fear, expect, the only conclusion is that he prefers war to a satisfactory and fair solution of these disputes.

Mr. Benn *rose in his place, and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That this House do now adjourn:—

The House divided: Ayes 57, Noes 534.

Division No. 36] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mullin, Chris
Parry, Robert
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Vaz, Keith
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dave Nellist and
Mr. Dennis Canavan.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Bellotti, David
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benton, Joseph
Benyon, W.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George J.
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Sir Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Fookes, Dame Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Galbraith, Sam
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Sir Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McCrindle, Sir Robert
Macdonald, Calum A.
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Marjorie
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Richardson, Jo
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trimble, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Turner, Dennis
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John M. Taylor and
Mr. Tom Sackville.

Question accordingly negatived.

10.21 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to raise this matter. You will recall that when I intervened in the speech by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon to make a point about the confusion in the House and in the country about the technicality of the motion that we debated tonight, I was, to put it mildly, pooh-poohed. I was told that everyone in the country would understand what the vote meant tonight.

I should be grateful for your advice, Mr. Speaker, because not even everyone in the House understood what tonight's vote meant. There was great confusion in both Lobbies with Conservative and Labour Members going into one Lobby and then coming out. It is an absolute scandal that we should have voted in this way on such an issue.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is a former Whip so he should certainly understand the procedure of the House.

Mr. Ewing *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Speaker: Well, if he was not a former Whip, he certainly looks like one. I believe that the House understands the procedure on a vote taken on the Adjournment.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. All sorts of interpretation will be placed on the vote tonight. As a new Member, may I ask whether you can help me out by telling me your interpretation of that vote?

Mr. Speaker: Whenever we have a vote on the Adjournment, the Question is put in the way that I put it this evening. If the hon. Gentlman would like a private teach-in, I should be delighted if he would come to see me after I have left the Chair when I could discuss it with him over a suitable beverage.

PETITION

BALTIC REPUBLICS

10.23 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): It is my privilege to present this petition on a matter of grave concern which was signed as a matter of urgency on Sunday by 152 of my constituents who represent not only those of Lithuanian birth or parentage, but the Latvians, the Estonians and the many hundreds of Ukranians and others of the city of Nottingham. Their petition reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of the citizens and constituents of Nottingham of Lithuanian birth and parentage showeth that there has been military action and threat of repression against Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and other republics.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will call upon the Soviet government to withdraw its forces and enter into negotiation with the freely elected governments of the Baltic states, and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to withhold all economic aid to the Soviet Union.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Speech Therapy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.24 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The debate arises from specific problems in South West Durham health authority in ensuring that all school-age children for whom speech therapy is recognised as a need have access to appropriate therapy. My hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) and I wrote to the Minister requesting a meeting. The refusal of that request and the nature of the Minister's reply in health questions on 18 December prompted me to apply for the debate.

The areas of difficulty are clear in South West Durham, but I know that they are not unique to South West Durham. There is a shortage of speech therapists nationally which has been highlighted in the House on a number of occasions and in Government reports. There is a great drop-out rate from the profession—almost equal that of teachers—and much demoralisation which was exemplified in the evidence given in the equal value case pursued by Dr. Enderby and Mrs. Clark, and supported by my trade union, the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union. I should make it clear that I am sponsored by that organisation, but that I am not speaking on its behalf tonight.

The position of children who are identified as part of a statement of educational need as requiring speech therapy is particularly difficult. If a health authority recognises that a child requires speech therapy but is unable to make it available, what happens? The response from the Under-Secretary of State for Education to a question from the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) is not helpful. It says of the Court of Appeal ruling on the Lancashire case, as it is now known, that

"speech therapy could be considered either educational or non-educational provision. However, the ruling does not diminish health authorities' general responsibilities under the National Health Service Reorganisation Act 1973 to provide speech therapy, and it does not mean that education authorities are under any legal obligation to fund speech therapy."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1990; Vol. 182, c. *288*.]

In other words, the Minister says that it is a responsibility of the Department of Health.

The general problems to which I have referred are highlighted in the South West Durham area. The health authority covers part of my constituency and part of that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland. Other Durham county Members have been involved in representations because of constituents who are affected.

In south west Durham the decision was taken nearly two years ago that the cover being given on a general referral basis was so inadequate that it was virtually useless. A decision was taken to prioritise. The process has highlighted serious deficiencies and made them clear to people seeking speech therapy, to general practitioners, and so on. It may be that other means would not have highlighted the shortages quite so much, but that is what happened in south west Durham. I know that there are severe problems in other parts of the country.

The system of priorities led to 409 children over five years of age being discharged from therapy. By now, that number has presumably increased. Those children were not referred on a whim. Speech therapy was identified as necessary to their learning.

I quote the case of five-year-old Andrew Wayman of Watling terrace, Willington. The report from the speech therapist, as part of the statementing process under the Education Act 1981, recommended that Andrew needs weekly speech therapy, a language programme devised by a speech therapist and implemented daily as part of his everyday routine by his teaching staff and parents and additional support in school to assist that work.

The need for speech therapy of that nature was subsequently confirmed in the statement issued on 3 August 1990. By that time, Andrew had received speech therapy four times, and his parents had been notified that he did not come within the priority system and therapy was being withdrawn. The local education authority has considered joint funding for speech therapy posts in the district health area. However, there are six health authorities within the Durham county council area and to provide posts for all those authorities would be exceptionally expensive at a time when the local education authority is having to reduce expenditure to comply with Government spending regulations.

Andrew's mother, Mrs. Wayman, is to be congratulated on her determination to get the very best for Andrew. She has co-operated with the authorities at every stage, but knows that Andrew and many others like him are simply denied the help that it is acknowledged they need. I am sure that I need not remind the Minister that Her Majesty's inspectorate's report on reading, published only last week, said that problems in getting prompt and sufficient specialist help for those children with severe reading difficulties deserved to be taken seriously. Those problems are taken seriously by parents like Mrs. Wayman, speech therapists and organisations such as the Association for All Speech Impaired Children, who know about the effect of lack of speech therapy.

This evening we are looking to the Government to demonstrate that they take the problems seriously and are prepared to do something about them.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I suspect that the child of whom my hon. Friend is talking may well have attended or be attending the school in Spennymoor of which I was head teacher for nearly 10 years and which local children attended. I am absolutely appalled to find that that school now gets no speech therapy. There are children in my constituency who attend my ex-school whose parents have written to me. The policy of South West Durham health authority is that no child over five will receive speech therapy. It is an appalling disgrace that children in special education who desperately need speech therapy do not receive it from that health authority.

I hope that my hon. Friend will pursue the Minister tonight to get a solution to that problem that involves not only the Government, but the South West Durham health authority making more funds available so that more speech therapists can be employed.

Ms. Armstrong: My hon. Friend makes his points cogently. The child attends a special school now. When he was first identified, he was in the nursery class attached to Willington Church of England-aided school. The head told me when I visited the school that six of the 22 children in the class required speech therapy. South West Durham

has allocated its priorities in such a way that, unless children between the ages of five and 16 have a specifically identified disability, they do not receive speech therapy.

It would be beyond my professional expertise to comment on whether the priorities that the authority has identified are the right ones, but I know about and can comment on the inadequacies in the service that those priorities have highlighted, and their serious consequences. I understand that the Government are funding a project with the College of Speech Therapists to compile standards for the future provision of speech therapy. When will that project be completed? Will the Government take prompt action on its completion to promote and secure those standards nationwide? Can the Minister outline the steps he will take to ensure that South West Durham upholds those standards and has the resources to do so?

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) may be interested to know that South West Durham spends more per head of population on speech therapy than neighbouring Durham and North West Durham. Yet it still faces enormous difficulties which leave constituents with problems that they should not have to face.

Will the Government initiate urgent discussions with the Department of Education and Science to sort out the unholy mess surrounding responsibility for speech therapy for children with special educational needs? The Government must recognise their responsibility in this area. Ever since the Education Act 1981, the issue has been tossed around between Departments. Numerous people and organisations have contacted me in the past few days, some of them disputing the interpretation of the decision of the Court of Appeal by a Minister in the Department of Education and Science. It is critical that Departments work together so that parents are not left in the indescribable position of being told by one Department that the matter is the responsibility of another. They are often left in the middle, feeling that they have let their children down even though it is not their fault.

Children such as Andrew Wayman do not have a second chance. Children should not have to look for a second chance; we should give them the best possible chance first time around. This is a pressing issue for South West Durham, and I hope that the Government will commit themselves to ensuring that children get the therapy they need, when they need it.

10.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): First, I apologise to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) for the fact that she sought a meeting with me and, due to a misunderstanding in the Department, that was, not explicitly, but by implication, refused. If a meeting is sought by an hon. Member, my policy is to agree to it and I apologise for the fact that the impression was given that I was refusing to meet her on a issue where there is rather less division between her and the Government than perhaps our actions and her words might lead people to believe.

In reality, there is no dispute at all between the hon. Lady and the Government and between the Government and the speech therapy profession about the value of the speech therapy service to the users of it. It is a key service which has been developing quite fast within the national health service since 1979, during the period for which the Government are responsible, and that is because we recognise that it is a service which offers opportunities to people to develop or to rediscover a key life skill, and is, therefore, an important part of a comprehensive system of health care.

Understandably, in the context of the pattern of provision in South West Durham, the hon. Lady has concentrated on the importance of speech therapy to children between the ages of five and 16, but I am sure that she would be the first to acknowledge that that is not the only client group for whom speech therapy holds important benefits. Another client group that is often quoted and for which speech therapy holds particular benefits is stroke victims. The Government recognise and, as I shall seek to show, have developed the speech therapy service against the background of the recognition of the value of speech therapy in terms of developing life skills or of rediscovering them after the victim has suffered a stroke.

The best evidence of the Government's commitment to the importance of speech therapy is to be found in the Government's record since 1979 in committing resources to the development of speech therapy and in the employment of speech therapists within the NHS. The revenue expenditure on speech therapy services in England has risen by 120 per cent. in real terms during the past 12 years, with the result that in March 1990 we were employing 2,856 whole-time equivalent speech therapists in the NHS, compared with 1,510 12 years earlier. That is an increase in the number and capacity of the speech therapy arm of the NHS of 89 per cent. during the period for which the Government have been responsible.

We can demonstrate not only in words but in actions that there is no division about the importance of speech therapy and the benefits that speech therapy can offer. That is not to say, of course, that all the problems have been solved, and I shall deal with that in a moment.

Mr. Steinberg: A constituent of mine whose child was attending my ex-school received a letter which said:

"Due to the ever-increasing demands on the speech therapy service, South West Durham health authority has to implement a policy whereby we provide therapy only to children under five years of age. Although your child may still require help with his speech and language, unfortunately we are unable to offer him speech therapy and his name has been taken off our lists."

That is abominable and disgraceful. We must do something about it, whether that means the health authority or the Government allocating more resources or more speech therapists being trained.

Mr. Dorrell: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, it would help the House if he allowed me to make my speech. He should agree that his intervention did not take the argument much beyond the points that were clearly made by his hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West. I was seeking to demonstrate that the Government do not need persuading of the importance of speech therapy. We also recognise that further progress needs to be made in the development of the service from the position in which we now find ourselves.

The service is significantly more developed than it was 12 years ago, but clearly further steps must be taken. The health service currently employs six speech therapists per 100,000 of population. As the hon. Lady came close to

[Mr. Dorrell]

saying, that is roughly the ratio of speech therapists employed in South Durham. The Davies and Enderby study argued that there is a need for a significant increase, and pointed out the opportunities that exist for using skilled speech therapists more effectively than present delivery patterns allow, by making proper use of assistants, ensuring that skills are accurately targeted at those who need them most, and making certain that the therapist has the skill necessary to meet the needs of a particular patient.

We take all those factors on board and they form part of the speech therapy service's long-term planning. Also, we are currently reviewing the pay and grading system used in the employment of speech therapists against the background of the undoubted difficulties encountered in some areas of recruiting people of adequate skill. We have not only a record that demonstrates the importance that we recognise should be attached to speech therapy but plans to take the service further as resources become available, as part of a growing national health service.

We acknowledge the national need to develop the service and, as the hon. Lady knows, it is part of the NHS's management structure to define broad national objectives but to leave the design of the delivery of the service to local health authorities, because they have a degree of knowledge about the circumstances of a particular locality that cannot possibly be matched by the service's central management at Richmond house. We seek to encourage delegation of management decision-making because we believe that is by far the best way of providing for the effective use of resources in meeting identified health needs within a particular district.

The hon. Lady asked me to comment on the question of who has responsibility for the provision of speech therapy services. Although she may understandably feel, in the light of certain recent cases, some uncertainty in that respect, we are clear now that the primary responsibility rests with the national health service. It is a health issue. Ministers at both my Department and the Department of Education and Science, as well as the Council of Local Education Authorities, agree that prime responsibility for speech therapy should remain with district health authorities, in respect both of children with special educational needs and the generality of patients.

I do not seek to shuffle off responsibility for the service. It would be odd if I did, because it has developed significantly under this Government's period in office and is much more complete now, in terms of the service that it provides, than it was some years ago. We plan to develop it further, because we recognise the opportunities that exist for the effective use of resources in the speech therapy service.

I was keen to put that general picture on the record because it is important for it to be understood that the Government do not have an equivocal attitude towards the service. It is true that, in respect of the speech therapy service—as with all others within the health service, and as with the rest of private and public sector provision—there will always be choices to be made between relative priorities. We shall always want to develop it and other services faster than resources allow and, for resource reasons, we shall always have to put the brakes on the service's rate of development. However, we have developed the service and we fully intend that, against the background of a growing national health service, it should continue to develop.

I shall now comment on circumstances in the South West Durham health authority. It is important that the national health service should be run on the basis that general guidelines and, more important, general health objectives are agreed at the centre, and the delivery and design of the service in a particular locality are left to managers there, who are far better placed to decide the detailed design of the service for their area than are Ministers in Whitehall.

The service that the hon. Member for Durham, North-West has described is significantly different from the type of service provided in the generality of health districts. Health authorities have a responsibility to provide, within available resources, a speech therapy service to meet the needs of all their local population.

I am pleased to say that, to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of speech therapy services in South West Durham, the district health authority has now invited the Department's speech therapy officer to review provision of that service within the area, probably with a professional colleague from outside the Department.

I hope that the hon. Lady will take that as evidence of our desire to ensure that the design of speech therapy services in that health district conforms with a proper national expectation of the sort of speech therapy service that we want to be delivered there and elsewhere in the country. It is not an indication that the health authority has, to put it crudely, got it wrong, but simply a desire to ensure that, in using the scarce resources at its disposal, the health authority either has produced or will produce a design for the speech therapy service that meets the proper expectations that people have for that service, against the background of a health service which is committed to the development of speech therapy services and fully understands the benefit that it can bring to patient groups.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 16 January 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr. Speaker: Before we start Question Time, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the digital clocks are not working and that hon. Members should therefore keep an eye on the clocks at each end of the Chamber—particularly when speeches are limited to 10 minutes.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctica

1. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any discussions with the Government of Australia on Antarctica.

7. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans any discussions with the Australian Government on Antarctica.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): We have had no formal discussions with the Government of Australia on Antarctica since 30 October 1990 and there are no plans at present for such discussions. Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and from other Departments informally discussed our respective Antarctica policies with their Australian counterparts in the margins of the recent 11th special consultative meeting of Antarctica treaty parties in Vina del Mar, Chile.

Mr. McMaster: Is the Minister aware that the Australian Foreign Minister is fast losing patience with the British Government's refusal to agree to a mining ban? Will he think again, talk to the Australian Government, and support their plans to stop exploitation of Antarctica's minerals?

Mr. Garel-Jones: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, that is not an accurate reflection of the case. At the Vina del Mar meeting, only eight countries supported the Australian-New Zealand position in support of a total ban, whereas 18 did not. The British Government's policy is to deal first with the immediate threats to the environment and at the same time to seek a consensus among the treaty parties on a way to deal with the minerals issue.

Mr. John P. Smith: The Minister and the House will be aware of the link between research in Antarctica and the excellent work of the National Environmental Research Council based in Barry Dock in my constituency. Are we to assume that in the same way as the Government decided to close that centre of excellence, they intend to oppose a mining ban in Antarctica and to continue to allow the dishonourable situation in which Japan will be allowed to undermine any future compromise, such as a moratorium?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The reverse is true. As I pointed out to the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), the majority of the parties to the treaty do not support a total ban and the British Government's objective is to find a compromise that will enable that issue to be dealt with at the same time as we confront the more immediate threats to the environment.

Mr. Colvin: Is Australia party to the Antarctic treaty? I understood that under that system the consensus decisions reached over the past 30 years have led to Antarctica becoming the most environmentally protected continent in the world.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Australia is party to the treaty and my hon. Friend is also right to suggest that one reason why the Government are so anxious to preserve the consensus basis of the treaty is that, as a result of it, Antarctica, which is already designated a special conservation area, is probably the most protected continent on earth. We intend to underscore that and to introduce even stronger environmental protection.

Mr. Summerson: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the minerals convention is not ratified, that will put at risk the entire Antarctic treaty system? If that happens, the whole continent will be open to exploitation by all the countries of the world.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We know of no company in Britain or anywhere else in the world that has any intention to explore for minerals or hydrocarbons in Antarctica. My hon. Friend is right to the extent that the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities, which was orignally agreed by consensus by all the parties to the treaty, is unlikely to be ratified because two of the claimant countries—Australia and France—have declined to do so. We therefore consider it a priority to find a compromise that will allow the minerals issue, even though it does not pose a current threat, to be dealt with at the same time as the more immediate threat to Antarctica's environment.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister recall that at the previous Question Time he said that if no consensus existed round CRAMRA now he would take the lead in trying to find another consensus? Will he see Senator Gareth Evans, the Australian Foreign Minister, when he is in the United Kingdom next week and talk to him about this matter? As the American delegation leader in Chile said that the minerals convention is now dead, will the British Government come to terms with that and, at Madrid in April, join the growing clamour to close the door on all mineral and oil prospecting in what is nature's last unspoilt wilderness?

Mr. Garel-Jones: First, Antarctica can rightly claim to be an unspoilt wilderness because of the consensus that has existed among Antarctic treaty parties for the past 30 years. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be seeing the Australian senator when he comes to the United Kingdom and I should certainly be prepared to do so if

asked. However, I stress again to the hon. Gentleman that the United Kingdom suggested the protocol, which involves protection against tourism, waste disposal, marine pollution and species and habitat protection—all moves to protect the threat that we know exists to Antarctica. Britain led the way by saying that by the time we agree on those matters in Bonn later this year we expect the minerals issue to be decided. As the hon. Gentleman suggests, and as I pointed out in a letter to him on 19 December, we are working to find a bridge between the two opposing views among Antarctic treaty parties.

Mr. Dunn: Has any British company—or indeed any company—expressed an interest in exploring for minerals and hydrocarbons in Antarctica?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. He has written to me on a number of occasions and has taken a close interest in the matter. The most important thing that we have to understand is that there is a range of threats to the environment in Antarctica and those threats are being dealt with on the basis of a British protocol. We have also set down a timetable to ensure that by the time we meet in Bonn a compromise is found to deal with the minerals issue. As my hon. Friend underlined, we know of no company, either in Britain or anywhere else, that has any plans at this moment to explore for minerals in Antarctica.

Common European Defence

2. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on discussions he has had with his European partners in relation to common defence.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The NATO ministerial meeting in December agreed that the European allies should take a greater role. For NATO, the Western European Union and the intergovernmental conference of the Twelve on political union, discussion of European defence will be a key task for this year.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State enlarge a little on that answer, especially in regard to our relations with the French? Have there been any discussions about the future role of the strategic deterrent, and sharing such a deterrent with the French, and about the role of naval power and its implications for bases in the United Kingdom? I know that that may be more a matter for the Secretary of State for Defence, but it has implications for bases in Scotland such as the Rosyth naval base and dockyard. Will the Secretary of State comment on these remarks?

Mr. Hurd: As I understand it, there is steadily growing defence co-operation between ourselves and France and that is something which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence welcomes and takes a hand in, but it does not take the form of proposals for a shared nuclear deterrent.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Has the Foreign Secretary sought guidance from the Belgian Government about the reported refusal to supply ammunition to Britain in case it might be used in the Gulf conflict? As that could put British lives at risk in a prolonged conflict, does he believe that such issues should be clarified before he seeks to transfer our defence responsibility from NATO to some European organisation?

Mr. Hurd: There are no plans to transfer our basic guarantees of security from NATO to anywhere else. I am sure that the request to Belgium for ammunition is still being discussed.

The Gulf

3. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position in the Gulf.

4. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress towards the implementation of United Nations resolutions affecting the middle east.

Mr. Hurd: Since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, we and many others have made sincere efforts to bring the Gulf crisis to a peaceful solution on the basis of the Security Council resolutions. Those efforts were redoubled in the last days, notably by Mr. Baker's meeting with Tariq Aziz on 9 January and by the United Nations Secretary-General's visit to Baghdad on 13 January. Iraq failed utterly to respond positively to any of these initiatives. We continue, as we did yesterday, to urge Iraq to choose the path of peace. But the deadline yesterday was a real one. If Iraq does not withdraw from Kuwait it will be forced to do so.

Mr. Winnick: Is not it clear that the wholly negative response of the Iraqi regime to the French proposals of yesterday and even more so to the visit of the United Nations Secretary-General shows only too well that it is Saddam Hussein who wants war to keep Kuwait and that it is poisonous nonsense to suggest that it is the allies who are keen on war?

Is not there a further lesson to be learnt by the democracies from this: that besides opposing appeasement, they should not arm dictatorships? Why is it that time and again dictatorships such as that in Iraq have been armed by the democracies? Admittedly, the Iraqis have not been armed by us in the past few years, but they have been by France, Germany and the Soviet Union. Do not we understand that these are the very arms that can be used against our own people?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point; he put it well. As for his second, as he acknowledged, we have not been arming Iraq. We have been applying, at some cost to our manufacturers, an embargo against it since the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war. I agree that the whole issue of how arms are sent and how to prevent them from falling into the hands of possible aggressors needs to be discussed.

Mr. Home Robertson: Only one thing is more depressing than the refusal of the British and Americans to co-operate with yesterday's French initiative, and that must be the failure of the Iraqis to respond to that initiative, which could have established a link between United Nations resolutions affecting Kuwait and those affecting Palestine. When, as now seems inevitable, my constituents in the Royal Scots have to play their part in liberating Kuwait, will the Foreign Secretary take urgent

action to ensure that they never again have to get involved in conflict in the middle east—by tackling the underlying instability of the area and ensuring concerted international action to resolve the Palestinians' legitimate rights?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, certainly; when aggression against Kuwait is reversed we must all return with new vigour to look for a just solution to the Arab-Israel problem. But the hon. Gentleman has studied this matter for years and he cannot seriously believe that there would be any hope or advantage in an international conference, convoked in the context of the aggression against Kuwait, on the Arab-Israel problem. Which of the parties that he wants to be there would attend? That would not be a way of restarting the peace process on Arab-Israel.

Mr. Churchill: Will my right hon. Friend explain to hon. Members who believe that sanctions should be given more time to work the risks attendant on such a policy for the British and allied forces in the Gulf? Is not it the case that beyond the middle or the end of March temperatures in excess of 100 deg. F would make the use of nuclear and chemical protection suits almost impossible, that that could put British forces at risk for about six months and that there is no guarantee that at the end of that period the Iraqi regime will not have developed nuclear weapons?

Mr. Hurd: There is no guarantee that if the use of the military option were postponed for any length of time it would be as effective as it could be now. Without going into my hon. Friend's specific question, that is true. The will and the means exist now. In my view, it would be very rash to suppose that the two would come together again so well in the near future.

Sir Dennis Walters: The British Government have rightly confronted with great vigour the indefensible aggression of Saddam Hussein against Kuwait. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that equal vigour will be displayed as soon as possible to resolve the Palestinian issue and to deal with Israel's defiance of repeated United Nations resolutions and international law?

Mr. Hurd: We have to apply equal vigour, but, as my hon. Friend suggests, the one must come after the other. In both cases we need to follow the Security Council's guidelines. First, the Security Council resolutions that we debated yesterday are very clear as regards Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Secondly, as my hon. Friend knows better than I, resolutions 242 and 338 cover Israel and suggest what is in essence a compromise—what is sometimes called land for peace. We have to follow with vigour every possibility of achieving such a settlement.

Sir David Steel: Does the Secretary of State accept that last week on both the west bank and in Gaza I found deep demoralisation and a sense of frustration among the Palestinians about the fact that the outside world has taken so long to deal with the very resolutions that he has just cited? That is why last night's statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations was so important —promising that as soon as the Kuwait crisis was over there would be a middle east peace conference. That is something which I hope the Secretary-General will pursue in both the Security Council and the European Community, so that at last we may portray Saddam Hussein properly—as an obstacle to the wider middle east peace and not as an assistance to it, as, unhappily, so many think that he is.

Mr. Hurd: The latter two questions have been fairly put. That is exactly the position. Saddam Hussein has been an obstacle, not an effective advocate. However, the right hon. Gentleman knows that there is no magic about an international conference. It needs to be called in circumstances where it has a chance of success. That is why the vexed problem of Israel sitting down with representative Palestinians has to be tackled and solved first. It was that which James Baker and the Egyptians, with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, were trying to sort out before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In one form or another, we shall have to return to that problem before there can be a successful conference.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that in the present situation the possibility of 11th hour initiatives, whether from Yemeni sources, France or elsewhere, and any possible future initiatives have to be viewed in the context of virtually every permutation having been tried, particularly by the Arab countries, with Saddam Hussein and all having foundered on his simple refusal to withdraw from Kuwait? Is not it the case, therefore, that we are in the position that the House endorsed yesterday and that further initiatives are unlikely to take us anywhere at this time?

Mr. Hurd: That, sadly, was the view to which we came at the European Community Foreign Ministers meeting two days ago, and events have proved us right.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Has the Foreign Secretary had time to reflect on the suggestion made to him last night that would effectively get us out of the problem of Saddam Hussein trying to link the two issues? Yesterday, Palestinians were shot by Israeli defence forces on the west bank. During the recess, 20 Palestinians were killed by the Israeli defence forces. These are grave breaches of international law. If we are to demonstrate to the Arab population in the middle east that we are determined to uphold the status of both international law and the United Nations resolutions, by means of parallel endeavours we could deal with these issues separately from the Iraq-Kuwait crisis.

Mr. Hurd: We have not been silent on these events. As the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge, the Security Council dealt with and passed judgment on these events in the occupied territories all the way through last autumn and no doubt it will continue to do so. In real terms, a serious chance to tackle again with greater hopes of success the Arab-Israel problem will have to await the reversal of the aggression. However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we have to reject it. Everybody, including the Palestinians, will need to have fresh ideas if we are to do so with any success.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is sad that so few of our allies in Europe seem to be willing to recognise, in terms of providing assistance to the forces in the Gulf, that their interests as well as ours and those of the Americans are fully bound up in the Gulf crisis? Does he also agree that it is particularly sad that some of our neighbours who have sent albeit token forces to the Gulf are apparently now instructing them to take no part in any conflict that may take place?

Mr. Hurd: Let us see what happens. I hope to attend a WEU meeting in Paris tomorrow which no doubt will pursue that. I welcome strongly the statement made today by the French President.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that Security Council resolution 681 carried on 20 December with regard to the Arab-Israeli dispute does not refer simply to an international conference, essential though it is, but to human rights violations by Israel involving shootings, deportations and other arbitrary actions on the population under Israeli occupation? That being so—of course, the international conference will have to await the end of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis, which we continue to hope will be resolved peacefully—action can be taken now because of the violations of United Nations resolutions.

Therefore, first, will the Government draw to the Israeli Government's attention their continued defiance of the United Nations? Secondly, if need be, will the Government raise these matters again urgently at the Security Council since, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) points out, the shootings and deportations continue? Thirdly, will the right hon. Gentleman tell the Israelis that, although at present it is not possible to convene that conference, there will come a time when the world will turn its attention to this matter fully and a proper resolution involving self-determination for the Palestinians must result, so the Israelis would be well advised to start talking now?

Mr. Hurd: As the right hon. Gentleman said, the Security Council and our representative on it have not been silent or held back from expressing a view and strong criticism of the acts of repression and, particularly, the deportions in the occupied terrorities. On the future tackling of the problem, on behalf of this country I have gone to some difficulty to make it clear that we do not accept the policy of the present Likud Government in Israel which rests the security of Israel on continued occupation. That is not acceptable and it is not safe for Israel in any longer-term view. We hope that the time will come when Israel will accept that and settle down to working with others for a more stable outcome.

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

5. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had on the conclusions reached by the recent conference on the nuclear test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The partial test ban treaty amendment conference is due to end on 18 January. We have made it clear that we do not support the proposal to convert the treaty into a comprehensive test ban. Because our security will depend for the foreseeable future on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons, we have a continuing need to test our nuclear weapons to ensure that they remain effective and up to date.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that that is a disappointing answer? Will he assure the House that he will listen to the discussions that will continue until 18 January, when a vote will be taken on replacing the 1963 partial test ban treaty with a comprehensive treaty? Does not he understand that there are now compelling reasons for moving towards a comprehensive test ban on nuclear weapons? Is he aware of the signals that would be sent if the United Kingdom Government voted against that and tried to veto any such decision? More important, does he understand the need to try to influence in a positive way the United States contribution to the conference, which may also be considering vetoing any such conclusion?

Mr. Hogg: Of course we shall listen to all the arguments that are adduced at the conference. We have reached the conclusion that our security depends on the possession of nuclear weapons. To maintain effective and up-to-date nuclear weapons, we have concluded that we must retain the ability to test.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that hon. Members are beginning to return to the consensus that as long as others have nuclear weapons we should have a credible deterrent? It is fallacious for the Opposition to suggest that we can have those weapons without testing them, because their safety and effectiveness cannot be proved unless they are tested in underground, safe conditions.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend put the argument extremely clearly and I agree with everything that he said.

Mr. Robertson: Few people—I can think of no hon. Member—are not conscious, with some fear, of the prospect of the conflict in the Gult involving the use of nuclear weapons by countries such as Iraq. The Minister will therefore understand how depressing his answer was. This week, the Government have a chance to act rather than to agonise on the proliferation of nuclear weapons to countries such as Iraq. Converting the 1963 partial test ban treaty into a comprehensive test ban treaty would be an automatic method of stopping the dangerous expansion of nuclear weapons into the hands of other countries. Why, therefore, as the technology to verify nuclear tests is available and reliable, cannot the Government take a lead in ensuring that this small measure, which would make the world much safer, is taken?

Mr. Hogg: Much as I should like to agree with the hon. Gentleman, I am afraid that I cannot follow him in his argument, not least for this reason: Iraq, the country which he mentioned, is a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty. Notwithstanding that fact, it is still seeking to develop a nuclear weapon.

European Legislation

6. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in the United Kingdom in implementing European legislation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Commission's latest report on single market implementation shows that the United Kingdom has implemented 84 per cent. of measures requiring national implementation. Only Denmark, with 88 per cent. and Portugal—taking into account its derogations—with 85 per cent., had a better record than the United Kingdom.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. As this country has such a good record in the

implementation of European legislation, will he outline the steps that the Government are taking to ensure maximum compliance by the more laggardly members of the European Community?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In this, as in so many other European endeavours, the United Kingdom has one of the best records in the Community. We intend to put forward ideas on implementation, enforcement and compliance at the intergovernmental conference, which we believe will strengthen the rule of law throughout the Community.

Mr. John D. Taylor: In view of the perception of many members of the European Community that the United Kingdom is a bad member of that club, what efforts have the Government taken to publicise in those countries its first-class record in enacting legislation for 1992?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. If we have been laggardly, I assure him that we are not being so now. Many of our partners are aware of our excellent record and are anxious to support our endeavours to strengthen the rule of law throughout the Community.

Mr. Dykes: In view of the obvious importance of hon. Members being able to follow European legislation and to scrutinise it in advance, through contacts with Community institutions in Brussels, and as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office takes the lead on EC liaison, will my hon. Friend make a point of liaising with the office of the Leader of the House and the Services Committee on the proposal for dedicated telephone lines so that Members here can keep in regular contact with Community institutions and the Commission in Brussels, notwithstanding the obvious reality that a few nervous, hesitant Members think that it is dangerous to have regular contact with foreigners?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am not aware that many hon. Members, with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), are reluctant to have contact with foreigners or with foreign parts. This specific matter is one for discussion between the usual channels and between my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House. We would certainly support them in any actions that would give hon. Members better and closer contact with events in the Community.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister aware that the EC Commissioner for social affairs, Mrs. Papandreou, following her meeting on Monday with the Secretary of State for Employment, said that the completion of the internal market by 1992 was in jeopardy because of what she called the negative British attitude towards elements of the social action programme? Following the Thatcherite hostility to the EEC, has there been only a change of style, or is there really a change of substance? Are the Government prepared to move towards majority voting in the social action sphere?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has already pointed out that the Government have the best record throughout the Community in implementing the directives that are associated with social action. We are in no way being laggardly. We contend that in this matter, as in so many others, we are at the forefront.

Israel

8. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the state of relations between the United Kingdom and Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Relations are correct and friendly, although important differences remain on the peace process and on Israeli policies in the occupied territories. My right hon. Friend had useful discussions in October when he visited Israel, as did my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when the Israeli Prime Minister called on him on 17 December.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Last week on a visit to Israel, I found that the Israeli Government were well aware of the dangers of becoming militarily involved in the Gulf crisis. Although Israel has, of course, every right to defend herself, will my right hon. and learned Friend urge the Government of Israel to continue to show the considerable restraint which she has so far shown? Will he confirm that, were Saddam Hussein to attack Israel, the consequences for him would be serious?

Mr. Hogg: We have taken every opportunity to impress on the Government of Israel the need to exercise self-restraint. They have done so and deserve the gratitude of the House.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When talking with the Israel Government, will the Minister make it clear that he has noticed the remarks by the Palestine Liberation Organisation leadership that it regarded the whole of the land of Israel as the Palestinians' birthright and that he will not be misled, confused or in any way diverted by those who try to excuse Saddam Hussein's inexcusable invasion by dragging in the issue of the Israeli settlements?

Mr. Hogg: I can promise the hon. Lady that I shall not be confused or misled in any of the respects that she mentioned or, I hope, in any other.

Mr. Adley: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, because most of the world, particularly the Arab world, perceives double standards being employed by many countries towards illegal occupation of neighbouring territories, there is an increasing danger of public opinion in countries such as Egypt, Syria and Lebanon introducing an element of aggravation which is not apparent in the attitude of those Governments to the current conflict in the Gulf? Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, if we are not careful, some of our allies in the present situation will be totally separated from public opinion in their countries?

Will my hon. and learned Friend make the Government's position clear and say that if either Iraq or Israel invades or uses Jordanian territory, our attitude towards any such incursion will be the same as our attitude towards Iraq's incursion into Kuwait?

Mr. Hogg: Our attitude towards Israeli policy in the occupied territories is wholly plain. I have taken the opportunity to stress our policy both to the Israeli

ambassador and Deputy Foreign Minister and they know well that we regard the Israelis' occupation of the territories as unlawful and believe that they should withdraw.

Mr. Ron Brown: As members of the Iraqi national assembly wish to come here to brief this House about their country's intentions towards Israel and other parts of the middle east, should not formalities be waived, especially in view of the late hour and the serious possibility of war breaking out? Details of this matter have been known to the Prime Minister's office for some time and he has remained silent. Is not that an absolute disgrace? I hope that the Minister will reply today on the possibility of a peace mission from Baghdad coming to speak to hon. Members on both sides of the House. That is most important.

Mr. Hogg: If members of the Iraqi assembly have any influence at all, I suggest that they impress upon Saddam Hussein the need to leave Kuwait immediately.

Mr. Rhodes James: Is the Minister aware that, although the Friends of Israel has disagreements with the Israeli Government's policies, as far as we are concerned, the independence and freedom of the people and state of Israel are non-negotiable? Will he make that very clear not only to the Israelis but to our Arab friends?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a vital point. Israel is entitled to a secure existence and the world community must seek to achieve that.

Bangladesh

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the prospects for democratic government in Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The interim Government's main commitment is to hold free, fair and impartial parliamentary elections which have been set for 27 February. We hope that all concerned will co-operate towards realising that objective.

Mr. Hughes: May we hear from the Government a welcome to the end of the military dictatorship of ex-President Ershad? Particularly because Bangladesh receives so much money from this country and our links are so strong—I welcome the presence of the Minister for Overseas Development on the Front Bench—may we have a clear statement of our unequivocal view which is that there must be democracy in the other countries of the world, such as Bangladesh, and that we will not countenance giving support or assistance to those who seek to reinstate military rule, now or in the future, in what was once a democratic country?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am happy to say that the prospects for democracy in Bangladesh are now much brighter. The interim Government of Mr. Justice Shahabuddin, in lifting the state of emergency and press censorship, are seeking to allow all parties access to the news media. They will be welcoming outside observers and restructuring the election commission. We are happy to welcome those developments.

Sir George Gardiner: Further to my hon. Friend's reply, will he undertake that, when he and his colleagues give future consideration to applications for development aid from Bangladesh, proper account will be taken of the view enunciated by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to the Overseas Development Institute last June—that in deciding these matters, full account will be taken of whether the applicant country has proper, democratic institutions and, indeed, a pluralistic society?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I am happy to say to my hon. Friend that opportunities have recently been taken by the high commissioner in Bangladesh to stress that very point. He made a speech in the presence of former President Ershad, stressing the importance that aid donors attach to the maintenance of good government. A Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation of British Members of Parliament recently made the same point to the former President.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister confirm whether the acting President of Bangladesh has made a formal request to the British Government, to the Commonwealth Secretariat and to other countries to provide representatives to monitor the elections due to be held in Bangladesh at the end of next month? If such a request has been made, will the Minister give an assurance that it will be treated with urgency and receive a positive response from this country and, I hope, the rest of the international community?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government have said that they will welcome independent observers and I understand that an approach has now been made to the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide monitors.

Latin America

10. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress towards democracy in Latin America.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Within the past year, democracy has been restored in Chile and Nicaragua and consolidated in Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Peru by peaceful transfer of power following free elections. Except in Cuba, democracy is now the norm in Latin America.

Mr. Arnold: Is not it encouraging that, at a time of considerable turbulence around the world, Latin America has quietly got on with the job of reintroducing democracy and coping with its economic problems? Is not it a shame that we are not to see a clean sweep? It is high time that Fidel Castro and his socialist regime in Cuba stood down in favour of elections there.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is right. It is encouraging to see democracy taking root in that way in Latin America and to see liberal, social market economic policies being introduced alongside that. My hon. Friend is right. Perhaps the reason why the Cuban people still tragically labour under a communist/socialist regime is that those regimes, as we saw in Nicaragua, are rejected by the people when subjected to the democratic process.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Minister recall that just over a year ago a large number of American forces invaded Panama, have since occupied that country installing their own puppet Government and subsequently vetoed United Nations action to condemn that invasion? What pressure is the Minister putting on the United States to withdraw all its forces from Panama, to guarantee the 1977 treaty signed by President Carter and to ensure that the people of Panama can elect a Government of their wishes not that of the United States army?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman might care to recall that the Government in Panama were elected and the United States action, which was warmly supported at least on the Government Benches, was an action to restore a democratically elected Government to Panama.

Soviet Union

11. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what particular assistance the United Kingdom is giving to the Soviet Union to help feed its people.

Mr. Hurd: The £20 million British know-how fund for the Soviet Union was announced in November last year. Its disbursement is under review in the light of recent developments in the Baltic states on which I shall be answering a private notice question shortly.

Mr. Coombs: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the main reason why a country so vast and rich in resources as the Soviet Union cannot adequately feed its people lies in the inefficiency, inflexibility and corruption of the Communist regime—a regime which the Soviet Union now appears to want to impose by force on the Baltic republics? Does he agree that it is appropriate that all economic assistance and trade credits should be suspended forthwith until there is proof positive that the Soviet Union is prepared to act in a civilised way without the use of force against Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in particular?

Mr. Hurd: It is true that food shortages in the Soviet Union are the result not of low production but of a collapsed system of distribution and that is why we thought that that was a sensible way in which we could help. It is in our interests that the Soviet Union should get on with perestroika and glasnost, but we must make it clear both as a country and as members of the Community, that we cannot be expected to help if the Soviet Union is returning to repression in the Baltic states.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: While we welcome the money made available to the know-how fund, is not £500 million in aid also going to the Soviet Union through the European Community? Would not it have been helpful therefore, if, instead of answering a private notice question asked by several hon. Members, the Foreign Secretary had given us a clear statement of the British Government's view and that of the European Foreign Minsters in their discussion in Brussels, particularly in light of what the Foreign Secretary has said? Many of us believe that in 1991 we are witnessing a repeat of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Mr. Hurd: The worry is there—the hon. Lady is quite right—but I do not think that it is a confirmed worry yet. However, I shall make our position more clear in a few minutes.

Mr. William Powell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people in this country are absolutely appalled by the murders that have taken place in Vilnius in the past few days and that they would find it very hard to understand if the British and other EEC Governments continued to provide economic support for the Soviet Union without a firm understanding that such behaviour will never be repeated?

Mr. Hurd: I agree that acts of repression of that kind, for which the Soviet Government must take responsibility, whoever actually gave the orders that resulted in the deaths, are not compatible with the kind of co-operation and help that we, Europe and the United States have set in hand.

Mr. Harry Ewing: The Foreign Secretary says that he is considering the £20 million fund and that he is listening to the plea from his own Back-Bench colleagues for him to reconsider economic aid to the Soviet Union. Does that mean that the Foreign Secretary is thinking about imposing sanctions that he is convinced will persuade the Soviet Union to change its course of action?

Mr. Hurd: We decided recently to give certain limited help, both as a country and as part of the Community, to President Gorbachev's Government as a reforming Government. Were they to turn their back on reform and continue along the path of trying to repress opinion with tanks, obviously it would not be possible to continue our part in that effort.

Mr. Cormack: Will my right hon. Friend seek a very early meeting with the Soviet ambassador and ask him to the Foreign Office? Will he tell him that there is enormous goodwill in this country towards the Soviet Union, but that the golden opinions that Mr. Gorbachev has brought over the past three or four years are now at risk and that, unless things are put right in the Baltic states, that goodwill will be quickly dissipated?

Mr. Hurd: I did that in my own language with ambassador Zamyatin on 8 January.

The Gulf (British Hostages)

12. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the arrangements that were made to deal with United Kingdom hostages returning from the Gulf.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Within three days of the Iraqi decree of 9 December that westerners were free to leave, more than 700 British nationals were safely evacuated from Iraq and Kuwait. The British embassy in Baghdad helped to obtain exit visas and chartered a number of aircraft. It also obtained places on regular flights and planes chartered by other western countries. The embassy in Kuwait, with invaluable help from the wardens, organised the movement to Baghdad of those who had been in hiding. On their arrival in the United Kingdom, the hostages were met by representatives from the Foreign Office, the Department of Social Security and the Ministry of Defence, as well as a number of non-governmental

organisations, including the Gulf Support Group and the Red Cross. All immediate requests for assistance were dealt with on arrival so that nobody was without funds, accommodation, medical care or general advice.

Mr. Beith: Is the Minister aware of the enormous relief of families that the hostages are at last home, some of them as recently as within the past few days? Will he convey the thanks of hon. Members and families to officials, particularly those in Baghdad and Kuwait, who worked under such great difficulty to help to bring that about? Will officials continue to be available to help hostages who have been through such a difficult and traumatic time? Will he also have a word with the Chancellor so that they will not face income tax bills because they were out of the country for less than the 12 months that they expected to be working away?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the three points that he has made. I am grateful also, on behalf of the Foreign Office, for his kind remarks. As regards future problems encountered by returning hostages, of course a number of agencies are available to help and are anxious to help. However, if there are any matters in which the Foreign Office can help in particular, the emergency unit is still available for that purpose. As regards the hon. Gentleman's point about income tax, it is an important point which the Treasury is considering at this moment.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. and learned Friend accept the best wishes from my constituents who were inconvenienced by being held hostage until the last minute in Kuwait? Will he also make public his belief that the Government will encourage private companies to do their best for people who were held hostage? It has come to my notice that, in one or two cases, when they have returned, hostages have not found the generosity of spirit which I am sure the Government would encourage private employers to offer.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a very important point. I certainly underscore what he has said.

Mr. Graham: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman do something about Customs officers who stopped a constituent of mine on arrival at Gatwick airport after he had escaped from Kuwait? He was incarcerated at the airport for over two hours and was fined £145 for possession of a video camera. I asked the Minister to intervene, which he did, and the fine was stopped. Nevertheless, will he ask Customs and Excise officers to act with sensitivity in future incidents? My constituent was treated deplorably and an apology was not good enough.

Mr. Hogg: I had the advantage of being present when the three aircraft came back and I had the opportunity of seeing how the returning hostages were treated. In all the cases that I saw, the Customs and Excise officers behaved with great sensitivity. I did not see anything that would justify the criticism that the hon. Gentleman has made, but I am happy to accept that there may have been the occasional lapse, and I am sorry about it. In the generality of cases, people were treated with great sensitivity. I talked to the officers at the time and it was clear that that was their purpose.

Mr. Hind: I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will accept thanks, particularly from people like me who had relatives amongst the hostages, for the efficient way in which they were removed from Iraq. I was grateful for the discretion of my hon. and learned Friend's Department. Bearing in mind the sensitive work that many hostages were carrying out in Iraq, can he tell me whether his Department, as well as the Ministry of Defence, talked to hostages who could perhaps provide useful intelligence for the armed forces during the forthcoming war, should it take place?

Mr. Hogg: As to the latter part of my hon. Friend's question, the answer is yes. The MOD had debriefing teams available and has discussed matters with many of the returning hostages. On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I am grateful for his kind remarks, but may I say that many voluntary agencies played a distinguished part in helping the refugees? I mention particularly the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and the Gulf Support Group with whom my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) was so closely associated.

NATO

13. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the future of NATO.

Mr. Hurd: NATO will remain the cornerstone of our defence, resting on a collective military structure which includes north American forces based in Europe. NATO is adapting to the changed circumstances and the Europeans expect to take on a greater responsibility within the alliance.

Mr. Welsh: Does the Minister foresee any out-of-area role for NATO, requiring changes in the original Brussels treaty? Will he state the implications for NATO of the current tragic position in Lithuania and the Baltic states?

Mr. Hurd: I do not foresee any treaty change in regard to the point that the hon. Gentleman raised, but I believe that NATO will need to take greater account of possible threats to it from out of area, including the area to its south. We are coming back to the Baltic states in a moment. I do not see a particular responsibility for NATO there.

The Gulf

14. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the Gulf following the expiry of the period set by the United Nations Security Council for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

16. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Hurd: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier.

Sir Hal Miller: Will my right hon. Friend make it plain that if there is a wish to preserve peace, to protect property and to prevent damage to the environment, all that can still be achieved if Saddam Hussein withdraws from Kuwait, and that we have no long-term intentions of remaining or exercising any colonial influence in the area?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Our aim is simply to carry out the repeatedly restated aims of the United Nations and bring about the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the restoration of the Kuwaiti Government.

Mr. Greenway: In evaluating the state of morale of the Iraqi forces, has my right hon. Friend taken account of press reports of large-scale desertions and low morale in those forces? What effect does he believe that that would have on the war, if it comes about?

Mr. Hurd: Morale is certainly patchy. I noticed that after his recent visit to his forces in the Gulf, President Saddam Hussein found it necessary to give them all a considerable pay hike. I am not sure that that is a good sign of future morale.

Mr. Galloway: When I was leafing through the list of the legitimate Government of Kuwait I discovered that 11 out of the 12 top Ministers and three out of the four provincial governors had the same surname—as-Sabah. That is not so much a one-party state, more a family business. I was wondering whether the Secretary of State had any plans, if—it is a big if—there is any Kuwait after the war which was declared in the House last night, to encourage a democracy in Kuwait which might be worth the lives of those who will die for it.

Mr. Hurd: Before the hon. Gentleman thinks himself so pleased with that question, he should recognise that it is for not the British Government but the Kuwaitis to make such plans and that they have done so. If the hon. Gentleman knew about the subject, he would be aware of the conference held in Jedda recently attended by Kuwaitis of many strands of opinion. The conference looked forward to the restoration of the 1962 constitution. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will now turn his attention to the constitutional arrangements in Baghdad.

Mr. Nellist: Leaving aside my total opposition to this war, will the Foreign Secretary make the following suggestion at the next meeting of the war Cabinet? As war is not only terrible but terribly profitable and many companies, especially arms and oil companies will make a great deal of money in the weeks ahead, could that money be put to public good—confiscated if necessary—so that hospital beds that have been closed can be reopened and so that there is not competition between civilian patients and casualties returning from the Gulf? That would show the hundreds or perhaps thousands who will be bereaved in the weeks or days ahead that their sacrifice is worth more than mere shareholders making rich pickings out of the next few weeks.

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman suggests that the purpose of the Government's policy, supported by the Opposition Front Bench to this time, has anything to do with the point that he makes, he is wrong.

Mr. Nellist: I was referring to the effect, not the purpose.

Mr. Hurd: The effects are substantial. The effects of any war are substantial and must be dealt with equitably. That does not affect the principle that the House debated and approved yesterday.

Lithuania

3.32 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent events in Lithuania.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The Government have condemned the use of force by the Soviet army against unarmed civilians in Lithuania, which led to many deaths and injuries on the night of 12 January. We strongly oppose the use of coercion against elected assemblies in the Baltic states. The European Community, after its meeting that I attended the day before yesterday in Brussels, has decided that its co-operation with the Soviet Union will be suspended if the situation prevailing in Lithuania is prolonged or extended to the other Baltic states.

As I have already said, we are reviewing our bilateral co-operation with the Soviet Union. We are also raising the rights of the Lithuanians at two CSCE meetings—one in Vienna and one at Valetta on the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Paris charter, which we agreed only at the CSCE summit last November, extends the scope of Soviet obligations to the Lithuanians.

I met the Lithuanian Foreign Minister this morning. I share his anxiety about the continuing threat of repression in Lithuania and the other republics. We believe, and have long said, that only free negotiation, based on democratic principles, can provide a lasting solution to the problems of the Baltic peoples and we urge the Soviet Government to follow that course.

Mr. Kaufman: We on this side totally condemn the killings, the use of state violence and all other repression by the Soviet Union in Lithuania. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, if President Gorbachev's statement that he did not order the violent action by Soviet troops is to be accepted, there must be a firm commitment that such measures will never be used again in future?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that we recognise the immense difficulties faced by President Gorbachev in dealing with the aspirations for national identity and self-determination in the Soviet Union in a way that will maintain stability and not lead to fragmentation of the USSR? We certainly believe that such claims must be responded to by negotiation, and that moderation should be exercised on both sides. At the same time, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the whole future of glasnost and perestroika would be placed in jeopardy if there were to be any thought of a return to Stalinist methods?

Will the right hon. Gentleman advise the Soviet Government that those of us who most strongly advocated not just some form of economic aid but greatly increased economic aid to the Soviet Union would find it impossible to continue in that view if there were a repetition of the weekend's slaughter in Vilnius? Will he make it clear that those who are most dismayed at those events are those of us who have been the strongest supporters and admirers of President Gorbachev?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman expressed that well. As he said, President Gorbachev has denied responsibility for giving the orders that led to the deaths. That is not enough in a country like the Soviet Union. More needs to be said about who was responsible and what the view is of the action taken. The right hon. Gentleman expresses the view which I was trying to express just now. It is overwhelmingly in our interests to support President Gorbachev the reformer, perestroika and the changes in foreign policy, from which we have all benefited. However, if he relies to such an extent for support on people who want to reverse those reforms, he will start on a path down which we cannot follow him with the help and co-operation which otherwise we would have planned.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Why are our memories so short? Is it not a fact that 50 years ago Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were cruelly subjugated by the Soviet Union and vast numbers of their people were murdered and deported? Is it not a fact that there has been rejoicing all over the world at the freedom won by Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the past year? Why should the three Baltic states be deprived of the same? If that is the case, why are we in the business of giving any kind of aid until the freedom of these people has been assured?

Mr. Hurd: The Governments and peoples of the three Baltic states have had their hopes raised in the past year or so. After 50 years of occupation by Germans and Russians, they have had their hopes raised precisely by the loosening of the system in the Soviet Union. It is that loosening of the system inside Russia and between Russia and the republics which we have supported and encouraged. It is in our interests that that should not be put into reverse. Whether that will go into reverse now hangs in the balance. We must use all our influence and the prospect of help to encourage President Gorbachev to assert himself against those who may wish to turn the clock back and continue repression in the Baltic states.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): What, if any, representations did the Government make at the CSCE conference at the end of last year when the Baltic states sought to be present, but were denied that opportunity? What response have the Government made to the appeal made on behalf not only of President Landsbergis of Lithuania but of the chairmen of the councils of Latvia and Estonia and of Boris Yeltsin to the United Nations and the leaders of the countries of the west, including our own?

Mr. Hurd: The CSCE operates on a consensus basis and that was why it was not possible to press the point about observers. However, I recollect that there were representatives from the three Baltic republics at the summit, though not in the position they hoped for.

Because of the question of procedure, I believe that the CSCE, rather than the Security Council, is the right place to pursue this. The hon. Gentleman will have noticed from my original reply that we have proposed precisely that at the meetings in Vienna and Valetta because the Soviet Union undertook at the meeting to which he referred wider obligations than those in the original Helsinki Final Act towards its own subjects and, in particular, minorities within the Soviet Union.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. Friend convey as quickly as possible to Mr. Gorbachev and the Soviet Government the fact that, although we understand their problems about constitutional reform in

the Soviet Union, which should or should not include the Baltic republics in the future—probably not—the repressive measures that he is using are an outright affront to the spirit of the Helsinki process in the CSCE forum to which my right hon. Friend has just referred? If Mr. Gorbachev pursues such measures, whether in the Baltic states, whose position is, to say the very least, ambiguous, or in existing republics within the Soviet Union, he should be told that he will have no place in the future architecture of Europe or the common European home about which he talks so much.

Mr. Hurd: That is certainly the gist of the message that was given by the United States Administration and by the Community at our meeting two days ago. That message will be conveyed strongly to the Soviet Union.

I believe that there is a distinction in most of our minds between the three Baltic republics and the other republics of the Soviet Union, based on the fact that, as the Father of the House reminded us, the Baltic republics annexed in 1940 in a way that we have never recognised.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is not one of the worst tell-tale signs the creation of bogus committees of national safety in those territories, which is a Stalinist tactic? Does the right hon. Gentleman know whether President Gorbachev has promoted and developed that concept, as that would be an important tell-tale sign?

Mr. Hurd: That is certainly a bad sign, particularly in a country such as Lithuania, where Russians account for only 9 per cent. of the population. I went into this matter with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister this morning; he believes, and he has convinced me, that the committee, if it actually exists, is entirely bogus.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend unambiguously reiterate Her Majesty's Government's position, which is that the United Kingdom does not recognise the present authority of the Soviet Union within the three Baltic states and that, de jure, the Soviet Union has no locus? Therefore would not it be better for the people of the three Baltic states if their right to self-determination were to be recognised forthwith?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend states the legal position exactly. In practice, the future of the people of the three Baltic republics rests on two things—the recognition by the Soviet Union of their rights and negotiation on all the practical matters that flow from that. Anyone who has studied the economies of the Baltic states or is aware of the presence of large Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia knows that that negotiation is essential. That is why, throughout this continuing drama, we have stressed both those points to the Soviet authorities and to the leaders of the three republics.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Of course the Baltic states must become independent again, but, in order to achieve that, is it the case that the Baltic states are considered by the Russian military as vital to their air, sea and radar defences? Unless fears in that respect can be assuaged, there is little chance of political movement and every chance that Gorbachev will be brought down by the military.

Mr. Hurd: The Soviet military are notoriously reluctant to give up what they have. There have been signs of tension between the policies of the Soviet Government and the wishes of the military, for example, about the withdrawal of troops from eastern Europe and the wish of the military for those troops to stay put. It is crucial that the authority of the Soviet Government should be the authority of President Gorbachev while pursuing the policies of President Gorbachev and that it should not be relegated, pushed down again, into the hands of the military.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that any moral indignation expressed by the Government is equally matched by the ability to deliver effective political and economic consequences? Even if my right hon. Friend does not give a lecture to the Soviets, will he at least invite them to take a lesson in history? What is now happening in respect of Soviet force in Lithuania is exactly equivalent to Tsarist Russia, whose land empire remains to remind us of the imperialism that once held sway over the whole of Europe. Will my right hon. Friend remind the Soviet authorities that the experience of every maritime empire in western Europe was that it had to give way to the forces of self-government, and that the same future inexorably and unavoidably awaits the Soviet Union—no less than it awaited the United Kingdom and other powers?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend is probably right. It is much harder to transform a former land empire than a sea empire, and it takes a good deal longer. Lenin tried to cloud the reality of that with a lot of new rhetoric, but that reality has returned. I do not know whether we could, as part of the know-how fund, fund some lecturers or advisers from the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the Foreign Secretary now attempt to adopt a consistent attitude on behalf of the United Kingdom Government? We are about to go to war to ensure the liberation of Kuwait, so will the Foreign Secretary tell the House that he is committed to the liberation also of the Baltic states?

Mr. Hurd: These cases, of course, vary in their particulars. *[Interruption.]* Of course they do. On 1 August last year, Kuwait was an independent country and a member of the United Nations. Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have effectively been under military occupation by the Soviet Union and by Nazi Germany for 50 years, so the circumstances are different—and therefore the remedies must be different. However, the objective must be the same and the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) is right to say that the people of the three Baltic states must be free to determine their own future—and we are working towards that end by the means that I described.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Will my right hon. Friend see the analogy between the fact that occupied Kuwait has an ambassador at the Court of St. James who appears in the London diplomatic list, and ensure that once again accredited diplomatic representatives of the sovereign states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia appear in the diplomatic list, as they did until quite recently, when they were physically overtaken by death?

Mr. Hurd: That point was not raised by Lithuania's Foreign Minister when I met him this morning, but I was glad to see him—and I shall be glad, by the means that my

[Mr. Hurd]

hon. Friend suggests or in other ways, to maintain contact with the leaders of the Baltic states. I am sure that contact will now increase.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): In view of events in Lithuania, does the Foreign Secretary think that President Gorbachev is still in control of the Government of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Hurd: The answer is a limited yes. I believe that President Gorbachev is increasingly seeking support among people who do not support his reforms. That may create a danger for him and a situation in which what he wants to do is not done and that which he does not want to do is done. There is here a test of the authority of the Soviet Union and we will do everything that we can to influence that test in the right direction.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is it my right hon. Friend's assessment that the repression in Lithuania is only one aspect of a wider tendency to revert to autocratic rule in the Soviet Union, perhaps led by the military—whose budget has, according to reports, substantially increased when it should have been cut? Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the new Soviet Foreign Minister that, if that is the trend, it will put at risk not only aid to the Soviet Union from the west but a much wider range of issues involving the Soviet Union on the one hand and United Kingdom, European Community and NATO on the other?

Mr. Hurd: I was certainly worried by what my former colleague, Eduard Shevardnadze, said when he resigned, because I had learned to respect his good sense, as well as his courage. There are worrying signs, but they are signs and not yet proofs. I believe that there is a struggle of ideas, and perhaps of interests, inside the Soviet Government, which is still concealed from us to some extent. It is very important that, within our influence, which I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) is limited, we should do what we can to enable perestroika to continue.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): Will the Secretary of State ask the President of Lithuania and its Government to cool it and to continue negotiations with President Gorbachev and the Soviet Union? While not condoning the killing of unarmed civilians, the Secretary of State will recognise that even the British Army has killed unarmed civilians in Northern Ireland—*[Interruption.]*—and that every day the Israeli Government are killing unarmed civilians, mainly boys and girls, on the west bank and in the Gaza strip, without any opposition from Conservative Members. Will the Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We often hear things here with which we do not agree. The hon. Member has a right to state his view.

Mr. Lambie: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Does the Secretary of State agree that the future of President Gorbachev and of democracy in the Soviet Union is more important than the immediate future and the immediate independence of Lithuania and the other Baltic states?

Mr. Hurd: Surely the hon. Member will agree that what he calls the future of President Gorbachev and of democracy in the Soviet Union cannot be assured if the Soviet military are allowed to carry out those sort of killings in the streets of a city which the Soviet Union declares to be within its borders. The two things simply cannot run together.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): What discussions did my right hon. Friend have with the Lithuanian Foreign Minister this morning about the Foreign Minister's publicly expressed view that there is a conspiracy between the Soviet Union and the administration in Iraq, and that, while the world's attention is concentrated on the Gulf, it gives the Soviet Union an opportunity to take a stranglehold upon the Baltic states yet again?

Mr. Hurd: The Minister did not speak of such a conspiracy to me, but I told him, because he was worried about the issue, that, as this discussion shows, we in this country and in the west have no intention of letting our concerns about the Gulf make us blind to or careless about what has been happening in the Baltic states.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): In addition to expressing our horror at the military clampdown, would it be a good idea to take President Gorbachev up on the words that he used in December 1989 in the United Nations about self-determination and accepting arbitration in the International Court of Justice? Since this country has never accepted that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are part of the USSR, is not it reasonable for us to propose, through the United Nations, that this issue should be put to the International Court of Justice?

Mr. Hurd: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I do not think that the prospects of that getting through the Security Council would be very great, and it would not have effect unless it were done in that way. That is why I believe that the CSCE, at this stage, is the better forum. In regard to the right hon. Gentleman's first question, we have not confined ourselves to warnings and criticisms. I remind him of what I said about the decision on Monday to suspend the technical assistance programme agreed in December if this repression continues. I should have liked to go a little further, and others would have liked to do nothing at all except verbally, but the decision that the Community took was, in practice, quite substantial.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to have regard to the subsequent business on the Order Paper and I hear that the ten-minute Bill is to be opposed, so I shall take three more questions from either side; then we must move on.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Do not the recent appalling events in the Baltic states underline the fact that the Government and the other European Governments made a serious misjudgment in trying to assist or support President Gorbachev in any way, bearing in mind also the fact that President Gorbachev was the KGB candidate for the leadership of the Soviet Union? Would not it be much better to give what support we wish to offer to those elements within the Russian empire that are clearly committed to democracy and to introducing a market economy?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that the hon. Member will recall that the prospects for self-determination and for an improvement in the Baltic republics stem absolutely from perestroika and the actions of President Gorbachev. All this process on which many hopes have been pinned would not have occurred without him. That is why it is necessary, not to give him the benefit of the doubt indefinitely, but to try to use our influence so that his reforming instincts and his wish for reform are sustained.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Apart from the lessons of Tsarist history and the de jure position to which my hon. Friends have already referred, does not the Soviet repression of Lithuania make a mockery of President Gorbachev's declared intention to convert the Soviet state into one founded upon the rule of law, elected parliaments and the consent of the people? Apart from suspending aid to and co-operation with the Soviets until such time as they desist, will my right hon. Friend make it absolutely clear that we have no intention of attending the human rights conference in Moscow later this year?

Mr. Hurd: The answer to my hon. and learned Friend's first question is yes, of course. These two things are incompatible. We hope that the repression in the Baltic states will turn out not to mark a turning point in Soviet constitutional history. Certainly, the future of the human rights meeting in Moscow must depend on developments in human rights between now and then.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Foreign Secretary recall that the moment carefully selected by Stalin to annex the Baltic states was precisely the moment when the world was preoccupied with the takeover of Paris by the Germans? Is not it likely that the bogus conspiracies by the salvation fronts in these three countries will climax at a time to coincide with events in the Gulf war so that the Baltic states may well be the first casualties of the Gulf crisis?

Did the Foreign Minister of Lithuania tell the right hon. Gentleman this morning about the invitation that the Lithuanians have sent out to international observers to come to Vilnius now? Does not he think that, if that happens, there is a chance that it will act as a restraint on the red army? Is not it right that Members of the mother of parliaments should be in Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius in these days to stand side by side with our fellow democratically elected members of parliament at a time when they are likely to be crushed by the red army?

Mr. Hurd: No, the Foreign Minister did not raise that, but the hon. Gentleman's general point is right. The more contacts we have with people in the Baltic states, including with the authorities, and the more people who go there to bear witness to what happens, the better.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Will my right hon. Friend agree that, if Russia is to become part of the European Community, as I understand she wants to, it is essential to get through to her that she must divest herself of her colonial empire and that she might make a start by divesting herself of the Baltic republics, which have never accepted their status as colonies of Moscow?

Mr. Hurd: Obviously, if the Soviet Union ever considered becoming a member of the European Community—with a capital C—she would have to transform a great many of her ways, including that one. But even at this moment she is a signatory of the Helsinki Final Act and now of the Paris charter and thus has obligations which entitle us to take up cases and pursue points that we would not be able to pursue with countries outside the CSCE. We shall take those opportunities to the full.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Foreign Secretary accept that the pleas that have come from President Landsbergis and other representatives of the Baltic states for support and recognition are not new and have not just happened as a result of the Soviet aggression in past weeks? They have been continuing pleas and perhaps one of the reasons why the Soviet troops think that they can escape international condemnation has been the equivocal attitude of the western democracies to these three countries for some considerable time.

When the right hon. Gentleman met the Foreign Minister of Lithuania this morning, was he able to give a positive response to the request by President Landsbergis that a United Nations commission be established to enable foreign observers to go into the Baltic states to witness what is happening? The two countries that have done so thus far are Hungary and Czechoslovakia, so they know what is really happening.

Mr. Hurd: The realities of the situation make it unlikely, to me, that a United Nations commission would get off the ground. That is why I believe that the CSCE is the better bet. A watershed, in my own mind, is the killing of people in Vilnius. When people are killed in that way in a European city, something has changed and earlier arguments take on a different importance. That is why I pressed as hard on Monday that the Community should not rest solely on words but should begin to take action.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Surely the same principle should apply to the settlement of the disputes between the Soviet Union and the Baltic states as we are applying to the settlement of the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait. Those principles are enshrined in the United Nations charter, to which the Soviet Union and ourselves are signatories. Will my right hon. Friend urge on President Gorbachev the need for him to be consistent and for the Baltic states to negotiate with the Soviet Union to prevent such horrible violence in Vilnius?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. Those are precisely the two messages or the two kinds of advice that we are giving and which we shall continue to give.

BILL PRESENTED

PORTS

Mr. Secretary Rifkind, supported by Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Wakeham, Mr. John Gummer, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mr. Francis Maude and Mr. Patrick McLoughlin, presented a Bill to provide for the transfer to companies of certain statutory port undertakings and for the disposal of securities of the companies; to provide for a levy on initial disposals of securities of any company receiving such a transfer or of rights to require the issue of such securities; to provide for a levy in respect of gains accruing to such a company on disposals of land which is the subject of such a transfer or of interests in such land or in land in which an interest transferred by such a transfer subsists; to provide for the transfer of certain property, rights, liabilities and functions

of the Port of London Authority to a company formed by that Authority and for the disposal of securities of the company; to amend the law with respect to lighthouses, buoys and beacons and the authorities responsible for them; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 57.]

Hearing Aid Services (Contracting-Out)

4 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require health authorities, in certain circumstances, to contract-out the provision of hearing aids and services ancillary to such provision.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will have received complaints from constituents——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very difficult to hear at this end of the Chamber. Will the hon. Gentleman speak up a little?

Mr. Favell: I shall indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will have received complaints from constituents about the length of time that they are required to wait for a hearing aid. In its excellent publication "Hearing Aids: The Case for Change" the Royal National Institute for the Deaf pointed out that, in some parts of the country, a consumer may wait up to two years—I have come across even longer waiting periods —for a hearing aid. That is not good enough. People often wait until their hearing difficulty is far advanced before they go to see their general practitioner about the problem. To have to wait for up to two years for a hearing aid when one is elderly is a ridiculously long period. If a man needs a hearing aid, his wife complains bitterly that he has the television up too loud. If a woman needs a hearing aid, her husband complains that his wife does not hear what he says to her.

The Bill will help to reduce the waiting period. My proposal is that, unless a district health authority can within three months test and fit with a hearing aid a patient who is referred to it, the testing and fitting must be contracted out to the private sector. For the time being, the hearing aid would continue to be supplied by the national health service. My proposal is by no means a complete answer to a very complex problem. However, I believe that it is a start.

According to the RNID, 3·9 million adults in the United Kingdom with a hearing loss are likely to benefit from a hearing aid. It is important to explain how a hearing aid is obtained. The consumer has two choices. He can go to a private hearing aid dispenser. Unless the patient is in need of medical advice, the dispenser will sell him an aid that costs between £350 and £1,000. Alternatively, the consumer can go to his general practitioner with a view to obtaining a free national health service hearing aid on permanent loan. Not surprisingly, in view of the cost of the private hearing aid, four out of five people choose to go to the national health service.

If the general practitioner judges his patients suitable for a hearing aid, the patient is usually referred to an ear, nose and throat consultant. Surprisingly, that occurs whether or not the general practitioner believes that the consultant can do anything for the patient. In some parts of the country, general practitioners can refer patients not requiring medical or surgical treatment directly to hospital audiology departments. Clearly, that is preferable, because it is estimated that half the cost of fitting a hearing aid is taken up with seeing a consultant whose advice is not needed, and it takes them away from more important work and adds to the waiting list.

The RNID and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), who has done a great deal of work in this sector and highlighted the problems of the existing system, have both been critical of unnecessary referrals. They often lead to long delays, In my constituency, there have been direct referrals for almost 15 years now, and Mr. Gerry Dunster, the chief technician there, tells me that there have been no problems during the 13 years that he has been chief technician. When my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) was at the Department of Health, he responded to the criticisms. He published a consultative paper in July 1989 and set up a working group and a pilot project to encourage direct referrals by general practitioners to hospital-based audiology departments. Furthermore, he encouraged health authorities to enter into contracts with the private sector for the provision of hearing tests and the fitting of hearing aids.

My Bill goes one step further than that. It obliges health authorities to employ the private sector whenever they are unable or unwilling to provide a speedy service. I believe that it is an important measure to reduce waiting lists. Even when general practitioners were permitted to refer directly to hospital audiology departments in my constituency, where, as I have said, there is a direct referral system, there was still a 12-month waiting list for testing and fitting hearing aids. It was only after I kicked up a rumpus that the management responded and contracted out work to the private sector. The waiting list has now been reduced substantially, to the delight of my constituents.

Similar results have been achieved at the Royal Liverpool hospital, where I have been, thanks to the work of Mr. Anthony McIver of Merseyside regional health authority, Mrs. Julie Pritchard of Dee Hearing Services, which is a private organisation, and the excellent co-operation of the national health service. There the waiting list was reduced from 15 weeks to three weeks. At St. Mary's hospital in Paddington, which I visited yesterday, there is no audiology department because of staffing difficulties. The service is now run by a private sector organisation—Siemens—which has reduced the waiting list from 14 months to four weeks. Only a few health authorities with long waiting lists are volunteering to involve the private sector. The laggards, in the interests of their patients, should be obliged to do so.

4.8 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman seek to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Ewing: Yes. I promise not to detain the House for long. I have had a request from my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to be brief, and I shall do a deal with him if he is prepared to speak as briefly as me.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): And the Minister.

Mr. Ewing: Yes.

This is a serious issue. It is yet one more attempt by Conservative Members to break up the co-ordinated service that has been offered by the national health service under successive Labour Governments. The national health service was introduced by the late Nye Bevan on the basis that it should be an integrated service, free at the point of use. Throughout the past 11 years, Conservative Members have sought to attack the national health service and this Bill is yet a further attack on that integrated service that has been such a jewel in the crown of health care in the United Kingdom. It is in the best interests of those who have hearing problems and who must attend clinics to obtain hearing aids and appliances to enable them to hear more easily, that this service remains with the national health service.

I shall make only those few brief comments, because the arguments against privatising other aspects of the national health service have been rehearsed. The hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) said that the Bill is not the complete answer to the problems of those who use deaf aids and hearing aids. I must tell him that it is no answer at all. It is compounding difficulty with further difficulty and I oppose it.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 80, Noes 182.

Division No.37] **[4.10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Sir W. *(Crydn S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Critchley, Julian
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Tony
Favell, Tony
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grylls, Michael
Hayward, Robert
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, James
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Mudd, David
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rost, Peter
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Stanbrook, Ivor
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Richard Holt and
Mr. David Harris.

NOES

Adams, Mrs. Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy

Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lambie and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly negatived.

Privilege

4.21 pm

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I am sponsored as a Member of Parliament by the National Union of Mineworkers. I wish to draw the attention of the Committee of Privileges to the guidelines for sponsored Members of Parliament first issued by the Yorkshire area of the NUM in 1975, which, at the time, the Committee of Privileges judged to be a serious contempt. The then president of the national NUM acceded to the Committee's request to nullify the decision. All those developments are spelt out in the second report of the Committee of Privileges, published in the 1974-75 Session.

The matter rested there until December 1990, when the general secretary of the Yorkshire area of the NUM reissued the guidelines in a letter to me. I have pointed out to the general secretary of the Yorkshire area the events of 1975 and asked him to withdraw the guidelines. He has declined to do so. I therefore believe that I have no alternative but to ask the House to refer the complaint to the Committee of Privileges.

I therefore beg to move,

That the matter of the complaint be referred to the Committee of Privileges.

Question put and agreed to.

Opposition Day

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

Hospital Service

4.23 pm

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston) *rose*——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Move it formally.

Mr. Cook: I am afraid that I must decline my hon. Friend's invitation to move the motion formally.

I beg to move,

That this House expresses concern at the effect on patient care of the closure of 4,000 hospital beds since the start of the financial year; records its alarm at the growing number of hospitals that have been forced by financial pressures to cancel admissions from their waiting lists for the remainder of the financial year; notes that health authorities have been compelled to take this unprecedented step because of Her Majesty's Government's damaging changes to the National Health Service which prevent them carrying forward a deficit; regrets the decision of the Government to impose self-governing trusts on 56 hospitals and other units despite the evidence provided by the consultation period of overwhelming opposition by public and by health staff, and deplores their decision not to submit this decision to debate in the House; and calls upon the Government to increase cash limits for the current year to enable hospitals to resume a full service to the public.

It is almost exactly a year since the House debated the national health service in the first Opposition day debate following the Christmas and new year break. In that debate, the then Secretary of State for Health gave the following ringing promise to the House:

"The winter of next year will not be dominated by cancelled operations, closed wards and cuts in services".—[*Official Report*, 11 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. 1123.]

At the time, I did not believe the right hon. and learned Gentleman and now I know I was right not to believe him. We meet this January in a winter during which more wards have been closed and more operations cancelled than last year or in any previous year.

Of course, we now have a new Secretary of State for Health and he comes to the job with clean hands. He is free, if he wishes, to criticise the mess that he has inherited from his predecessor, although he might be unwise to do that in this forum.

In trying to establish common ground on which we can build in the debate, I hope that the new Secretary of State will at least acknowledge that the position is now unique. Never before have dozens of hospitals in the health service been obliged to close their doors to patients on their waiting lists because the money has run out. That situation is without precedent in the 40 years of the NHS.

The nearest hospital to this place is Westminster hospital. In the second week of October, it closed its doors to all patients on its waiting list. Even now it is admitting fewer than half the patients for routine surgery that it would normally admit.

Westminster hospital is a teaching hospital and we depend on it to train and teach the next generation of doctors. In December I sat down with some of the medical students attached to Westminster hospital for six months

[Mr. Cook]

and they told me that they were spending their six months without the experience of the routine surgery for which they had come there.

The financial crisis does not just affect the teaching hospitals or London. Morpeth cottage hospital occupies a different position in the spectrum of NHS provision. I do not want to offend my hon. Friends from the north-east by suggesting that that cottage hospital occupies the opposite end of the spectrum of provision in relation to Westminster hospital, but it occupies a different part.

Morpeth cottage hospital and Westminster hospital are linked by a common financial crisis. On 21 December, Morpeth cottage hospital closed a surgical ward and an operating theatre for the Christmas break. What makes the Christmas break unusual is that on this occasion neither the ward nor the operating theatre will open again until 1 April when we reach the new financial year.

Last summer the No Turning Back group created something of a political stand by producing its manifesto for a fourth term of Conservative Government. Part of the electrifying notions in that manifesto related to the proposal that the NHS should be an emergency service only and that there should be compulsory private insurance for other routine, non-emergency operations. Right hon. and hon. Members on the Treasury Bench, with the exception of the Minister of State, Scottish Office, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is sitting there, ran to distance themselves from those proposals. I recall the former Secretary of State for Health stating clearly that he did not accept that as a vision for the health service. Only six months later the new Secretary of State presides over a health service which in many parts of England is an emergency service only and in which no routine operations are available.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cook: I will give way now, but I am conscious that this is a half-day debate which is in danger of becoming a quarter-day debate. If the House will forgive me, I will not give way on every occasion.

Mr. Madden: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend knows that wards are being closed in Bradford as a direct result of deficits and the same is true in many other health authorities. What is my hon. Friend's estimate of the amount of money required to make good that deficit to ensure that beds and wards are kept open, particularly when health authorities are being asked to be ready to admit 7,500 casualties who are likely to come from the Gulf within a matter of days, if not weeks?

Mr. Cook: I will refer to the Gulf later. However, with regard to my hon. Friend's question about the current deficit, the Government provided their estimate of the deficit in a written answer just before the House rose for the Christmas recess. The Under-Secretary of State for Health gave a figure of £40·5 million for the combined deficits across England. I rather suspect that that is on the low side, but even if it is doubled, we are still talking about a figure less than £100 million.

One of the ironies—a grotesque feature—of the present crisis is that hospitals are obliged to make deep cuts in the service that they provide to save relatively modest sums of their total budgets. We are inflicting cuts out of all proportion to the money involved. Of course, in many cases those cuts occur in hospitals that are particularly efficient. In his written answer the Under-Secretary of State explained those deficits as the result of "bad financial management". In his absence, I advise his colleagues in the Department of Health that I regard that approach as contemptible buck-passing. Many hospitals that have had to close their doors are among the most efficient in Britain.

Watford general hospital is recognised by Conservative Members for its waiting list initiative. In five months last year, one ward of 19 beds in that hospital treated 1,000 patients. It must have been one of the most efficient wards in any NHS hospital. That same ward was closed in November and will not reopen until April because of the lack of money to keep it going. What sort of signal does the Secretary of State think that that closure is sending to the staff who work in the wards of our hospitals? It is impossible to understate how much it demoralises the staff who deal with patients in our wards to be told that they must reduce the number of patients with whom they deal.

I have seen reports from Wrexham Park hospital in Slough which show that, in the past 18 months, it has cut its list by one third. Now, with appalling symmetry, that same hospital has been told to cut its operations by a third. The anaesthetist who worked on many cases when the hospital was clearing the waiting list said:

"After working after-hours and at weekends . . . to get the lists down, we now have to sit and watch them climbing back up."

What about the signal that we are sending to patients from those closures? There is one unavoidable result of the closed wards and cancelled operations of this winter: more patients will wait for their operations and more of them will wait longer. That is not a matter of speculation by me. Several health authorities have made precise calculations about what closure will mean for their areas. South Bedfordshire health authority has closed 126 beds at its general hospital. Those beds will not reopen before April. The same health authority has prepared its own estimate of what will happen to the waiting list by next April: it is that, by April, the number of patients waiting for operations for general surgery, for urology and for orthopaedics will double. The waiting time for hernia operations will increase from 13 weeks to 36 weeks. The waiting time for hip operations will increase from 24 weeks to 66 weeks. Clearly, doctors are requested to take impossible decisions on who gets treatment and who does not.

Another hospital near to this place is St. Thomas's. In November, St. Thomas's imposed a ceiling on the number of abortions that it would carry out. That ceiling rests at nine cases per week. One local GP has been quoted as saying:

"It seems to be a lottery each Monday morning. Once the nine places are full, people are turned away."

How can any consultant decide which nine women get the treatment for which they have been referred and which nine—or 19—women are turned away? It is wholly unacceptable that a woman's chance of the treatment for which her GP has referred her should depend on whether she comes to the front of the queue at the moment when there is a vacancy in that week's ration.

It is not only Opposition Members who are alarmed at the present situation. I do not imagine that Tory Members will speak up for what is happening in the hospitals in their

constituencies—it is not in the nature of Supply day debates to do so. But many of them know that what is happening is unacceptable in their constituencies and to their constituents.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) in his place, as he often is for health debates. He will know that I visited his constituency in December and the hospital that serves most of his constituents. It has one of the six longest waiting lists for general surgery anywhere in England. It would take one and a half years for the hospital to clear its waiting list, even at full working. While I was there, I saw a surgical ward being cleared of beds to be closed because the hospital will carry out only one third of the operations which it previously did. The hon. Member knows this well. Indeed, in the week after the Secretary of State was appointed, the hon. Member made a number of observations to the newspapers about the forthcoming crisis.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): He is very good at that.

Mr. Cook: I am glad to have the endorsement of the hon. Gentleman's colleague.

The hon. Member for Harlow struck on a happy phrase which was calculated to provide the maximum chill to the spine of a Conservative Secretary of State for Health. The hon. Member warned him that he faced another "John Moore winter", by which I presume that he was reminding us of the experience of 1987-88 when hospital cuts forced the national health service to the top of the agenda. Of course, that was the winter which pushed the Government into setting up the NHS review. The Government have spent the three years since dreaming up a dogmatic package to put health care into the market place and ramming that package through the NHS—deaf to the opposition of the public who use the service and blind to the informed criticism of the people who work in it.

Where are we after three years of near civil war in the health service? We are back exactly where we were when we started, with a winter of crisis in our hospitals. It is even worse than the crisis which began it all. The hon. Member for Harlow was, if anything, guilty of understatement.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Nonsense.

Mr. Cook: I think that the hon. Member for Harlow can defend himself against that unworthy and unjustified criticism.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was making the point not against my hon. Friend but because my hospital runs its finances extremely well. It has all the latest technology. Its performance bears no relation to the picture that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has been giving over the past half hour.

Mr. Cook: No doubt the hon. Lady's constituents will be delighted that she is satisfied with the state of the health service that serves them. I have to say to her that the figures tell another story. In the whole year, including the winter, of 1987-88, a total of 3,500 beds were closed because of financial pressure. Already in the financial year 1991 over 4,000 beds have been closed because of financial pressure.

As the whole House will know, it is a cruel irony of history that during one of the deepest crises in the hospital service the national health service may be called upon to make the greatest effort to cope with the casualties of the crisis in the Gulf. The Secretary of State has given a guarantee, as have other Ministers, that the NHS will cope with all the casualties of the Gulf and with all emergency cases from the civilian population. Of course, it will not be the Secretary of State who will be called upon to honour that commitment. The people who will have to deliver on his guarantee will be the doctors and nurses who staff our accident and emergency units—the nurses who tend patients who may wait for hours on trolleys for beds and the registrars who spend those hours ringing round perhaps 20 hospitals looking for beds. I have no doubt that those nurses and doctors will move mountains to deliver the guarantee given by the Secretary of State.

But neither the Secretary of State nor the House has the right to require that effort of our health staff if we simply respond to the Gulf crisis by taking out of the present number of wards 7,000 beds which the military says that it might need. The Secretary of State must assure us—I hope that he will take the opportunity of this debate to do so—that as many as possible of those 7,000 beds will be provided by bringing back into service some of the 10,000 beds that have been taken out of service during the past three years.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Will the hon. Gentleman be absolutely fair and straightforward about the 4,000 bed closures to which he referred? I am sure that he has read the report of the National Association of Health Authorities, which said that last year 3,500 beds were closed but most of those closures occurred for medical or health policy reasons such as new treatments which require shorter stays. That came from not the Department of Health but from a body as influential and authoritative as the National Association of Health Authorities.

Mr. Cook: I read that report with the greatest interest. I congratulate the National Association of Health Authorities on putting the best possible gloss on the data that it found. I was particularly struck with the paragraph in which it said that four out of 10 health authorities managed to get through the first six months of this year without closing beds because of financial pressures. Logically that leads one to the conclusion that six out of 10 health authorities have closed beds because of financial pressures.

Nor is that association the only witness. The survey carried out over several days by *The Independent* came to precisely the conclusion that I have quoted to the House. Over 4,000 beds have been taken out of service, either temporarily or permanently, at least partly as a result of financial pressures on health authorities.

There is another way in which the present crisis is more grim than that of 1987-88—the crisis which gave birth to the NHS review and led to the changes which are coming in April. We can be more dismal than we were three years ago because Ministers have dropped any pretence that the changes coming in April will solve the problem. In that, the Secretary of State is a sad declension from his predecessor. The right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) was always refreshing in his irrepressible optimism. He was a born-again reformer. He continually assured us that, once in place, the changes in the national health service would transform it and wipe away waiting lists. We may not have been convinced by his assurances, but at least we were entertained by him.

[Mr. Cook]

The right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) is much more cautious in his language. He will recall that he and I took part in a radio debate following the decision of Tunbridge Wells hospital that it, too, would close its doors to everyone but emergencies. When pressed by the interviewer on whether the new system in April would avoid such cuts, the Secretary of State was unable to overcome his natural honesty. His reply was that, under the new system, cuts would be smoothed over the year as a whole. In other words, in the new system we shall have service reductions every month of the year, not only the winter months.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Can the hon. Gentleman explain to the House how the abolition of prescription, eye test and dental charges and of competitive tendering which would cost the health service £500 million in total would do anything to solve the problems that he has described?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman asked three separate questions. I shall deal with two of the three. As he offered me a multiple choice question, that is not an unreasonable attempt. We have had ample evidence of what happens when competitive tendering is introduced. We get dirtier hospitals and patients are more poorly fed. We are not prepared to accept that in a public service.

I make a prediction to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members will allow me to proceed with my speech, I shall make a prediction. All the companies that poured into the hospital sector three or five years ago thinking that they had found a honeypot are discovering that it is anything but. They are discovering time and again that they cannot provide the service required in the NHS and make a profit. I predict that if such companies continue providing services under tender for another three or five years prices will quickly be ratcheted up. That will wipe out the alleged savings, but we shall be left with a worse service.

The hon. Gentleman's other point was about the charge for eye tests. I make no apology to the House for repeating once again our clear commitment, as a matter of priority, to abolish the charge for eye tests and restore the free eye test. We shall do so because the charge is ruining an essential screening service. If only a fraction of the 3 million people who are not coming forward for eye tests develop serious and irreversible conditions of the eye and lose their sight, it will more than wipe out the alleged savings from that short-sighted measure.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame Jill Knight) will support us on that one.

Mr. Cook: The reference to short-sightedness is one which I should perhaps seek to change in *Hansard* when I have the opportunity to read my speech.

Before the hon. Gentleman interrupted, I was making the point that the changes in April will not rescue us from the present position. I hope that in the coming debate we shall be spared any Conservative Members telling us that we must have the changes in April to deal with the crisis in the national health service. The truth is the precise reversal of that. One of the reasons why we have the crisis this winter is the changes that are to take place in April.

The new system does not allow deficits. It was only because they could roll forward deficits from one year to another that many health authorities got through the past three years. Now even that freedom for manoeuvre has been removed. Conservative Members closed off the one turning space in which financial managers had some room for manoeuvre. Those financial managers are now exposing the underfunding of the service because they have lost the flexibility with which they used to conceal it.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way on this occasion, but it will be the last.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has said that the only spending priorities of a future Labour Government will be pensions and child benefit. The national health service would not be a priority. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with his hon. Friend, or can I tempt him to defy her in the House today and tell us what figure he would guarantee during the first year of a Labour Government for extra spending on the health service?

Mr. Cook: The decision which both I and my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) have taken is clearly spelt out in the record. It has been printed on several occasions, the most recent being last December. The spending commitments of the Labour party are perfectly clear. We shall fully fund pay awards in the health service. We shall make sure that year on year the health service is fully funded to meet demographic pressures, and during the lifetime of the next Government we shall restore the health service to the extent to which the Government have underfunded it. I shall be able to give the precise figure when the Government are willing to admit the degree to which they have underfunded the health service.

The present crisis and the troubles that are coming in April cannot be detected in the amendment tabled by the Secretary of State and his colleagues. The amendment before the House is of obtuse complacency. It recognises no problems and sees only successes. One series of statistics provides a measure of the health service in the 10 years of the Government's stewardship. They were not collected by the Government's statistical service. If they were, they would by now have been doctored.

The London emergency bed service has supplied figures on the number of times that it has had to go through the appeal mechanism to force hospitals to accept a patient for a bed. In 1980 and even in 1983 the emergency bed service had to trigger that procedure in only 7 per cent. of cases, but by 1988 it was triggering the appeal mechanism in 16 per cent. of cases and by last year in 29·5 per cent. of cases. In December last year the appeal mechanism was triggered in 41 per cent. of cases and in the first seven days of January the service was obliged to go through the appeal mechanism in 46 per cent. of all emergency cases with which it dealt. That is the reality behind the massive increases in resources to which the Government amendment refers. The reality is a fourfold increase in the number of emergency patients who must lie in pain and distress while an emergency service goes through an appeal system to squeeze an extra bed from the hospital sector.

Even when a patient gets into hospital, that does not guarantee him a bed. In the past financial year King's College hospital in Camberwell closed 120 beds. On 13 December the community health council counted 17 patients lying on trolleys in the accident and emergency department for whom there were no available beds. One patient who went through that procedure was Mrs. Julia Branch, who was admitted with kidney failure and who remained in acute pain for seven hours on a trolley in the accident and emergency department. At midnight she was transferred by ambulance to Dulwich hospital where a bed had been found. Her troubles did not end there. The bed that had been found for her was in a ward which was scheduled to be closed. Two days later she and the other patients in that ward were transferred to another ward at the other end of Dulwich hospital where she died the next day. She was 79. She belonged to a generation who voted for the national health service and who, through their working lives, paid to set it up. She deserved better from the NHS in her last three days than to be shuttled round in search of a bed that was not yet closed.

We are told that we now have a more human Government and that we have a gentler Secretary of State for Health. There is one obvious test of how much more caring and gentle they are. Three years ago the health service faced a similar crisis in our hospitals and that less caring, less gentle Government came up with extra money to stop the cuts. Will this new regime do the same, or is all the prattle about a more compassionate responsive Government so much cant?

There is another even more powerful precedent for financial help. The present crisis is provoked by the major restructuring of NHS finances in April. The cuts in our hospitals are a result of Ministers telling health authorities that it is for them to eliminate their deficit to make way for the financial restructuring. There is an obvious contrast with the entirely different way in which Ministers of the same Government have treated every public industry which they have privatised. Nearly every privatised industry has left the public sector with the generous parting gift of having its debts written off. British Steel had £4,500 million written off and the water industry £5,000 million. How is it that a Government can find more than £9,000 million to float two industries into the private sector, but cannot find £100 million to write off the deficit of the health authorities before the changes in April? Why is it sensible tactics to wipe the balance sheet clean because an industry is being privatised, but the wrong signal to management to give the same fresh start to a public service? Only this Government's double standards can explain why those questions are given different answers.

Tonight we shall give Ministers an opportunity to demonstrate their new caring credentials by putting to the vote our demand for the extra funds which the NHS plainly needs. We shall put it to the vote in the full knowledge that the Lobby will not demonstrate the new caring image. It will expose the same old double standards.

4.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

"welcomes the substantial increase under this Government in the number of patients treated by the National Health Service and in the availability of new and better forms of treatment; notes that this has been made possible by massive extra resources provided by the Government, combined with more effective use of those resources; welcomes the further record increase in resources planned for the National Health Service in 1991-92; congratulates those hospitals and other units which have sought and obtained approval to manage their own affairs as self-governing National Health Service trusts; looks forward to the setting up of the new general practitioner fundholding practices; and supports the Government's reforms which will continue to put patients first by further improving the quality, quantity and cost-effectiveness of health services.".

The background to this debate is sombre. We speak as a significant part of our armed forces is deployed ready for a battle which may be imminent. The admiration and pride of this House for them has been expressed eloquently from all sides. Let us today in this debate pay a special tribute to all the doctors and nurses out there with them who face many of the same dangers. Here at home our national health service, with all its immense capabilities, stands ready to provide the necessary support for the armed forces' medical teams.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: The House will forgive me if I use this opportunity to give an assurance that the management executive of the health service, in close co-ordination with the Minister of Defence, has made contingency plans which are well founded.

Mr. Cohen: What about private hospitals?

Mr. Waldegrave: I believe that there is little more that could be done and that the health service is ready.

It is right for the House to know how the Government intend to handle the financial impact on the NHS of what may happen. The situation is straightforward. We will provide the extra money to meet the full cost of any Gulf casualties. I have told the health authorities to let the hospitals know that they should spend what is necessary, and we are giving them guidance on how to account for and reclaim Gulf costs.

Mr. Cohen: What about private hospitals?

Mr. Waldegrave: If it is necessary for the resources of private hospitals to be bought with the money available, it is up to the regions to do so. I have told the health authorities—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Secretary of State's opening remarks must be heard.

Mr. Waldegrave: Health authorities will be able to continue to use all the money in their normal allocations for patient care.

Mr. Cohen: What about private care?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have been assured that there will be no break in non-Gulf related emergency work, but people may have to wait a little longer in the short term for non-emergency treatment.

Mr. Cohen: Why should not private beds be available?

Mr. Waldegrave: People will understand that, even if the hon. Gentleman does not understand how NHS finances work.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): It is profit before people.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman's yah-boo behaviour is embarrassing the Opposition Front Bench as much as it is irritating the public.

With the extra money for casualties, the commitment to which I have announced today, health authorities should soon be able to catch up. At this stage, it is for me to pay tribute to the service and the management executive for the efficiency with which they have undertaken the task of putting the NHS on a war footing. If it comes to fighting, the House and the country will once again have reason to marvel at the resources or commitment and skill which the direst emergencies call forth from everyone in the NHS.

The ability of the NHS to respond to emergencies depends on there being a clear chain of command and a clear division of responsibility among the professionals who work in this enormous service.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Jim Dyers of the Edinburgh Royal infirmary said that the 30 burns units in this country would be overwhelmed within days. What contingency plans does the Secretary of State have in mind for those victims?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady is right that there will be great pressure on burns units if fighting occurs. I am assured by the NHS management executive that it can handle the situation. We have put contingency plans in place. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps I may be allowed to answer the hon. Lady, or perhaps she is not interested in the answer. I am advised that it is unlikely that we shall be unable to supply all that we need, but if that is the case, the resources of neighbouring European countries will be made available to us.

The ability of the NHS to respond depends on its management chain and management skills. This is not a matter simply of management theory. We need a service which knows where it is going, which is patient centred, which has clear targets to work towards and which is accountable. It is in that context that I want to place our health reforms.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know whether Back Benchers wish to speak in the debate. If not, the two Front Benches can fill the entire time with the hon. Gentleman's help. I shall give way to him and then perhaps I can proceed.

Mr. Cryer: Rather than seeking treatment in other European countries, would it not be simpler, better and more efficient to requisition beds in private hospitals rather than strain the NHS beyond endurance to deal with any casualties? Surely that would demonstrate that the Government are not putting profit before people.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman displays less knowledge about the NHS than his Front Bench colleagues. The type of facilities that would be needed are simply not available in our private sector. The huge, skilled centres for burns units are to be found in the NHS only.

First, the philosophy behind our reforms is that there should be a separation of responsibility for the planning of health services from responsibility for the provision of health care—what we call the purchaser-provider split. This division is fundamental to our reforms. It is the key which makes it possible, for the first time, for us to have a national strategy for health that can actually be implemented. It enables us to define more clearly the proper responsibilities and functions of everyone who is involved in the health service. The distinct role of health authorities will be to assess the needs of their populations and decide how best they can be met. They will set local priorities and will contract with health providers to provide the best quality care at the best value for money.

Recently one general manager in the NHS described the new role of health authorities very well when he said:

"What the reforms will bring is a framework whereby what is being commissioned or purchased is an explicit statement of what we are doing to meet the health needs of the population."

I must say that I have been heartened in recent weeks by indications that the Labour party agrees with this fundamental distinction, though I understand that its policy document prefers to talk of "performance agreements" rather than contracts. There seems to be an emerging consensus around the fundamental principles of how to manage the NHS which I welcome, whatever the difference in terminology.

Secondly, the clearer definition of needs and contracting to secure the right kind and quality of services will strengthen accountability. It will strengthen the accountability of the provider to its patients and it will strengthen the accountability of the purchaser upwards towards this Parliament. As the Secretary of State, I am responsible for developing health services that will lead to improvements in the health of the people. In the past, holders of my office of both parties—read the memoirs—have found that there were precious few levers available to them to secure the priorities upon which Parliament might decide.

The reforms initiated by my predecessor will give me, and my successors, a far better chance to develop policies and priorities that will secure improvements through the objectives set for the purchasers. That leads us on to the fact that in the arguments about organisational reform, as well as in the perennial argument about resources, we have had too little discussion of those true health policy issues in Parliament. I now want to place them firmly on the record.

Recent reports, for example, have shown the persistent existence of health inequalities in our country. That is a long-standing issue that has challenged and defeated previous Governments and continues to defeat Governments even in the smallest and richest countries that spend most on health.

I want to remind the House that the requirement in the reforms that health authorities assess the health needs of their populations will, for the first time, provide a mechanism for truly addressing those issues. If a future Government were to discard that mechanism, those who care about the public health would not thank them for it. We have therefore decided to work towards developing a national strategy for health with some hope at last that the health service's part in achieving that may be properly co-ordinated. The strategy will give the NHS a clear set of goals against which to measure success and to set its priorities. I recognise that that will not be an easy task. We will consult widely and I shall shortly be publishing a consultative document setting out our ideas. We shall use that to invite the views of all those concerned with a view to publishing a definitive strategy document towards the end of the year.

The third principle behind our reforms is that the new arrangements will ensure a closer dialogue between the

hospital service and general practitioners. Under our proposals, hospitals must take fuller account of the wishes and contributions of GPs who are, in the normal run, the closest representatives of the medical interest of most patients. It is an inevitable concomitant of the contracting principle that consultations between GPs, districts and hospitals will have to become closer. I have already seen it happening. What is more, for the first time, GP fundholding will give GPs a route to direct financial empowerment if they feel that consultation is not enough to secure the services which they judge to be necessary for their patients. I regret sincerely that it is the present policy of the Labour party to throw away those aspects of the reforms and, in so doing, deny patients the benefits that will accrue. However, I have some hope that thoughtful Labour party sympathisers are questioning this present aspect of their party's policy.

Let me quote the views of Professor Le Grand, who, I am told, was a founder of the Socialist Philosophy Group no less, who said in a recent television interview:

"There is nothing in the new Labour proposals that will do anything about the power of patients or the power of GPs with respect to the power of consultants . . . . Indeed, they are proposing actually to abolish the GP fundholding practice which is the one instrument that we have got"—

so he says—

"at the moment for actually trying to control that power."

I hope that we shall come together on this as, as far as I can see, that should not be in any way inimical to Labour's beliefs.

Fourthly, our reforms will return responsibility for managing hospitals to the hospitals themselves. Those who work in hospitals do so because they regard that as a way of providing help and support to other people. I want to give those employees the opportunity to manage for themselves the resources for which they are responsible and to be able to respond to need without constant referral to higher authorities.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Trusts have been established in Stafford in advance of the arrangements that my right hon. Friend has described. The St. Christopher's trust works well and the hospice trust will work extremely well. I have visited the patients and it is clear that they and the employees benefit enormously from such trust arrangements. The existing practice in Stafford already shows that we are moving in the right direction with the current proposals.

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend. I have seen similar examples elsewhere.

If managements in hospitals are to be properly devolved, they need certain basic information about what things cost and the value of the assets that they are using. The reforms, with their emphasis on resource management and new technology, will ensure that that information becomes available. It will enable professionals and managers at all levels to make more informed decisions than have been possible in the past. Without it, talk of accountability, of setting priorities, of steering the service this way or that, is almost wholly empty. One cannot make rational choices if one does not know how much things cost.

Fifthly, the reforms will make available a more rational and explicit system for allocating scarce resources. The contracting system will introduce more flexibility and incentives for a more patient-centred service for hospitals and other units.

Hospitals will be funded according to the contracts they attract, which in turn will reflect the priorities set by DHAs and GPs when considering the health needs of their residents. This is far better than the present system of annual fixed-cash budgets for hospitals which so often seems to penalise efficient hospitals that treat more patients and indeed provide very little capacity to judge whether a hospital is efficient or not, leaving decisions to be made incrementally just on the basis of what has happened before.

The Opposition motion refers to bed closures about which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) spoke justifiably. One aspect of this is surely now well understood. The number of hospital beds is not a good indicator of health service activity. The trend in bed numbers has been downward for very many years. Modern medicine is often less traumatic for the patient. Hospital stays are becoming shorter and for many conditions are being dispensed with altogether. The NHS is treating more patients than ever before. All the evidence supports that: in 1989-90 the NHS in England treated nearly 8·5 million in-patient or day-case episodes—an increase in activity of nearly 3·5 per cent. The number of day cases has doubled to 1 million during the past 10 years, so the NHS has been able to treat more patients using fewer hospital beds. I know that the hon. Member for Livingston is well aware of that trend. I have a quote from him recorded in *Tribune*, which I shall not bother to read out, which makes it clear that he shares the objective of getting people out of hospital beds if that is the right course of medical treatment.

I do not deny that there are cases when hospital budgets have not been properly controlled, usually in the first half of the year, leading to acute difficulties in the second half. No financial system whatever—this is the point I was seeking to make on the radio and which the hon. Member for Livingston did not accurately quote—is foolproof against that. The House should not expect us to reward bad management by diverting inevitably limited money from those who manage better. For that reason a motion that proposes so cavalierly that health authorities should simply go on carrying forward deficits is not one that the Government can support. I am well aware, however, that we will not eliminate all deficits this year.

I genuinely fear that the proposals in the Labour party document to give extra money to hospitals that exceed their "activity targets" would only increase the likelihood of mid-year crises and bed closures. Every hospital would race for the prize money in a system that—as Labour agrees on every page of the document—must be cash-limited. Not everyone can be a winner. It would be a recipe for year-end confusion and disappointment and much worse than the present system—bad though it is—from which we want to escape.

Next year, the health service will receive a real terms increase of more than 4·5 per cent. and a cash increase of £2 billion. We have increased National Health Service funding in real terms by more than 50 per cent. since 1979. That financial and political commitment has undoubtedly been a key factor in enabling the service to treat more patients and to make more widely available new advances in medicine. The world of 1978-79, when defence received more than health, seems a long time ago.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister allow me to intervene?

Mr. Waldegrave: I did not interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I will allow him to interrupt me.

Mr. Cook: I intervene because I should not want that statement, which has been uttered by the Minister's predecessors on many occasions, to go on to the record unchallenged. In 1978-79, the health budget was higher than that for defence, as it was in every year since 1969 until 1980. It was the present Government who started spending more on defence than on health for the first time in 15 years, and they can hardly pride themselves on reversing the priority that they set.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is clear that Labour's spending priorities for the future do not give room for any confidence that it can do better than we are doing in the provision of resources. I shall justify that statement shortly.

I will make one more party point in the everlasting debate about who would do better in the provision of resources. Last year, the hon. Member for Livingston said that Labour would increase NHS funding by £3 billion over the life of a Parliament. We are doing that in one year. Wisely, the hon. Gentleman now refuses to put a figure on his commitment, partly because he has been silenced by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), and partly because he fears that we might achieve his new figure the year after. The hon. Gentleman's commitment has become subject, quite rightly, to the overriding qualification that he would be allowed to spend only what the economy could afford.

Speaking to Shearson Lehman, an American finance house, the right hon. and learned Gentleman went on record as saying that Labour would maintain

"a responsible fiscal policy, with prudent control over public finance, spending only as resources allow and as the economy can afford."

That is all very sensible, but the unfortunate hon. Member for Livingston is consequently not only unwilling to say how much Labour would spend on the NHS but is unable to stipulate where health stands in Labour's set of priorities. According to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), education is Labour's top priority. I have heard that there are serveral other top priorities, which means that the spending pledges made by the hon. Member for Livinston will have to go in the queue with all the other topics that Labour Members have earmarked as so-called top priorities.

I apologise to the House for briefly delving into the past, but it is as well to remind ourselves that the one and only time in the whole history of the NHS when funding ceased to grow in real terms was in 1977-78, under Labour. It is true that Labour achieved a 1·5 per cent. real increase for health when in government, but we have doubled that figure. They were half as good as us, because we have achieved a 3 per cent. increase.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman might have an opportunity to make further points later but I shall give way to him for the last time.

Mr. Cook: The Minister's figures are totally incorrect, and are the same as those used by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in last December's debate, which I checked at the time. Those figures left out of the reckoning the year 1974-75, and assumed that a Labour Government began in 1975-76. If one starts instead in 1973-74—as I got the Library to do for me—one finds that under the last Labour Government, health service expenditure increased by an average of 3·3 per cent., whereas under the present Government it has shown an increase of 2·9 per cent. Even that improvement is based on the massive rise during the Clegg years. If one takes the last 10 years, which is long enough to provide a proper comparison, the average increase under this Conservative Government has been 2·3 per cent. In the last five years of the previous Labour Government, the increase in health spending was 40 per cent. higher than during the last 10 years of the present Government.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman would have done his reputation more good if he had not made that extra-long wriggle. I remember, because I was working in Downing street at the time, that there was a Conservative Government during all but the last month of 1973.

We have been given another example of Labour's increasing equivocation, and the hon. Gentleman's credibility in respect of resources is wearing pretty thin. That is being increasingly admitted by honest Labour supporters. I quote Professor Le Grand:

"The Conservative Government has promised an extra £3 billion for the next financial year . . . It's difficult to imagine that Labour could do much better given the other demands that Labour will undoubtedly face on taking office."

I would substitute "would" for "will". Otherwise, every Labour Member knows—outside these knockabout Wednesday debates—that whatever party loyalty demands that he say, the professor is right.

At least there is now some consensus between us that resources will always be finite and that no system can absolutely guarantee that health authorities or hospitals will not spend more than their budgets, because Labour is committed to cash limits. That is one beneficial aspect of the support of Opposition Members for a party that agrees to cash limits. However, poor budget management means crisis management, which harms patient care—and that message is getting through.

In 1989-90, well over 100 districts showed a deficit. This year, 51 districts are currently predicting deficits, and all but a handful will have sorted themselves out by the end of the year.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have allowed several interventions, but in the interests of Back Benchers, I do not think that I ought to give way again. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, for he is a substantial figure.

Only a very few districts expect to have to take further action next year. The House will agree that that is an encouraging picture, but it has not been achieved without difficulty. In some places, it has contributed to waits for treatment which are too long. We are determined to continue the attack on that problem, and I am pleased to be able to tell the House that the Government are making available an extra £35 million to enable health authorities to tackle waiting lists in 1991-92. Of that, £25·5 million will be allocated direct to health authorities in quarterly instalments, linked to reductions in waiting times that have been agreed with the management executive.

For the first time, we are also asking regions to match those allocations pound for pound from their own

resources. They have agreed, which means that, overall, a total of £51 million will be available in the next financial year for schemes to reduce long waits.

As I demonstrated, we invested record sums of money in the NHS during the 1980s, but that in itself is not enough. No system can afford to stand still and let the world change around it. The task for the 1990s is to build on and to better that record.

It is generally recognised that as wider ranges of treatment are developed, and patients' expectations are raised, the cost of providing health services goes on increasing. Some commentators have pointed out that by extrapolating trends in straight lines, we could theoretically end up using more than 90 per cent. of the national budget on health care. That cannot happen, and it will not happen, because we will all the time have to be taking difficult decisions about priorities and relentlessly addressing issues of efficiency.

Mr. Graham *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it abundantly clear that he will not give way again, and hon. Members should not persist in trying to intervene further.

Mr. Waldegrave: We need to examine more closely the right balance between prevention and treatment. We must make health the true indicator of the effectiveness of the NHS. The service has brought about steady improvements in the nation's health. Life expectancy for men and women has gradually increased, and, at the other end of the spectrum, infant and perinatal mortality rates are now the lowest ever recorded. However, there is still a long way to go—for example, in getting at heart disease by encouraging better diet and more healthy lifestyles.

We have already taken steps to bring about a better balance. The new contract for GPs, which emphasises their role in promoting the health of their patients, is bringing benefits. Many patients can now attend health promotion clinics to get practical help and advice on staying healthy. Helped by the introduction of payments to GPs for reaching immunisation targets, we achieved 90 per cent. uptake rates for diphtheria immunisations last year. We have had similar success with the new combined mumps, measles and rubella immunisation. Against this background, I hope that I am wrong in thinking that the Labour party is still committed to repealing the GPs' contract. Could it really wish for a falling-back in immunisation rates to the old level? Surely not.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I have explained that I must press on and I am nearing the end of my speech.

These achievements by GPs are really remarkable, particularly in light of the fact that expert commentators had doubted whether the targets could be achieved. If I may quote one:

> "The targets . . . are so heroic, so far beyond the present figures for most practices, . . . that many doctors will give up trying".

As the hon. Member for Livingston knows, that was the hon. Member for Livingston's view in words that he used in the House in July 1989. I am happy to report, as I am sure he is, that GPs took not the slightest notice of him, and I am sure that he now joins with me in congratulating them on what they have done and welcoming the great benefits to patients arising from those higher targets.

Our policies for NHS hospitals—both trusts and directly-managed units—and for the NHS as a whole are, we believe, policies which deserve the support of those who work within the NHS and of this House.

Of course, within the huge resource increase of the last year and of next year, we will not, by some magic, be free of pressure on resources or arguments about resources. They are inherent in a politically accountable health service, which I believe had its first funding crisis two years after it was founded. But what we will have, at last, is a far more powerful system for securing even better value for the patients from those increased resources. Simply listing present problems—a technique of debate to which I could reply by listing all the problems that there were under Labour from the winter of discontent upwards or downwards—does not address the real issues. What the Labour party needs to do today is to convince the House that it has any ideas which merit our consideration about how better to manage the service so as to secure further improvements in our nation's health. I do not believe we have heard them, nor do I believe that we will hear them. Therefore, I wholeheartedly commend the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. Friends and myself to the House.

5.21 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I apologise to those on the Front Benches for the fact that I will be absent from the Chamber for the winding-up speeches. As some of my hon. Friends are aware, I hold an important post in this Palace as joint secretary of the all-party Rugby League group; we are to have an important meeting with the Minister for Sport at 6 o'clock, so I have to be present.

Having listened carefully to the Secretary of State for Health, what worries me is that the Government appear to view this crisis as purely and simply an academic book-keeping exercise. The Secretary of State made no mention of the implications for patients of the present cuts. I want to concentrate on the important human consequences of what is happening in the national health service, with the present beds crisis. Two cases in Wakefield, which I shall mention, typify many of the problems facing individuals who need health care because of the Government's policies.

I make no apology for being parochial, because the health authority in Wakefield has an excellent track record of being first in the field to make massive cuts, bed closures and even hospital closures. That was repeated in November, when there was an announcement of the closure of nearly 100 beds in two hospitals treating my constituents in Wakefield. At Pinderfields hospital, which serves most of my constituents, and is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), 22 beds were closed on S ward, a general surgery and neurology ward; 22 beds on H ward, an orthopaedic ward; five beds on ward 2, a neurology ward; 17 beds on ward 5, a general medical ward; and 16 beds on C ward, the plastic surgery and dental ward. At Clayton hospital, in my constituency, 13 beds were closed on Queen Victoria, the gynaecology ward.

In addition, short-term contracts for people employed by the health authority have been terminated, and there

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

has been a freeze on all vacant posts, including nursing posts. Those policies, and the implications of the cuts, have an important bearing on the range of treatments available to my constituents, and there have been dire consequences. I am learning of these daily, as people approach me to tell me of their circumstances.

For example, I am aware that two sessions of ophthalmic operations per week have been lost, which directly affects large numbers of elderly people suffering from such worrying conditions as cataracts. In Wakefield, we are fortunate in having a good ophthalmic service. I know the consultant, who has effectively treated a member of my family, and has done a first-class job of trying to reduce waiting lists. His efforts are set back by this policy.

Patients are having to be admitted to wards in which they would not normally be placed. Nursing staff have expressed their anxiety to me about the fact that patients with special needs are in wards where the medical equipment required for their conditions is not available.

I pay sincere tribute to the medical, nursing and ancillary staff in the Wakefield hospitals for the way that they have been trying to continue to provide a service, despite the effects of the Government cuts. For example, I have been told that doctors on S ward at Pinderfields continued to admit patients after the bed closures decree was announced by management. To prevent them from admitting patients to that ward, the management locked the doors. It is worth pointing out that complaints have been made to the fire prevention officer and to the Health and Safety Executive, because padlocks have been fitted to fire doors on that ward to prevent the admission of patients.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Incredible.

Mr. Hinchliffe: As my hon. Friend says, we have reached an incredible situation because of the Government's policies. One ward sister, Christine Robinson, whom I happen to know and who works at Pinderfields hospital, said to me yesterday: "You can lock ward doors but you can't stop strangulated hernias and acute appendicitis." That sums up the position within the NHS at the moment because of Government cuts.

The implications for constituents are clear. What saddens me about the Secretary of State's contribution to the debate is that he made no reference to the human consequences of Government policies.

I shall cite two cases in my constituency. The first concerns a lady whom I shall not name. I have a letter from her in my hand, and the Secretary of State and the Minister are welcome to see her comments. This lady, a pensioner, had physiotherapy and x-rays for a painful hip condition. In June last year, she was told that the only treatment that would help was a hip replacement operation. In her letter, she writes:

"My doctor got in touch with Pinderfields for an appointment, which after a long wait duly came for the 14th November nearly 6 months later. To overcome this I went to see the orthopaedic specialist privately at the end of August and paid £50, which is very much against my principles but for my own peace of mind I paid the consultant's fee. Quite a sum when you are on a pension, of £50·34. However, I felt it was money well spent and was anticipating having the operation in October/November. However, the day I thought I would be going into hospital they decided to close the female orthopaedic ward. The only consolation I have was that 25 other women were suffering from something similar to me. Obviously, apart from being disappointed, I am gradually getting worse. Now, it could be March before I hear anything. I am very fortunate in that I have caring and loving neighbours and friends from church who are willing to give me transport. I have virtually been a prisoner in my own home since July."

That was one of a number of cases of constituents who have been affected by the cuts in the NHS——

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hinchliffe: With respect to my hon. Friend, I must leave the Chamber soon, so I have to make a hurried contribution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) mentioned a constituent who had unfortunately died, and my constituent, too, has contributed to the NHS since its inception—yet when she desperately needed help, when she was suffering discomfort and pain, she received this sort of response from the NHS under this Government.

My constituent's circumstances are a direct consequence of Government policy. That policy is deliberately designed to contract state health care. We have often heard hostility to it expressed by Conservative Members, a hostility that has existed among them since the NHS began in the 1940s. Government policy is actively to encourage charitable fund raising. One cannot move in certain supermarkets in my constituency these days for people rattling tins—decent people who care that others are suffering because of lack of investment in the NHS, and raising money for diabetic provision, for spinal injuries, for breast screening and for terminal care, all of which should be funded by the NHS. But we are down to rattling tins, as we were before the NHS came into being.

Government policy is also about forcing people into private health care, with the sort of dire consequences that befell a constituent of mine—a pensioner who had to pay her entire week's pension to get a private consultation which she should have been granted on the NHS, for which she has paid all her life. Her name was Mrs. Margaret Hardacre, a lady who has unfortunately succumbed to certain problems in the private health care sector. She told me almost a year ago about the difficulty that arose when she was given a bill for £6,665 for the removal of bunions at Methley Park private hospital near Leeds. She had used her husband's medical insurance policy, provided as a perk through his job, with an organisation known as Western Provident Association. Faced with this enormous bill, my constituent found that Western Provident Association was not prepared to meet it, because it claimed that her problem related to an arthritic condition that she had had before she applied to join the association's scheme.

Professor Wright, professor of rheumatology at Leeds general infirmary—one of Yorkshire's experts on this condition—and the surgeon who treated my constituent for her condition, a Dr. Ghali, who is based in Wakefield, both certified that the foot trouble for which she had claimed benefit was not caused by or related to osteoarthritis. So clear medical evidence presented to the company was rejected——

Mr. Hayes *rose*——

Mr. Hinchliffe: I have already told my hon. Friends that I am not prepared to give way. Usually, as the hon. Gentleman knows, I would.

This lady suffered hell for two years, harassed by debt collectors and threatened, in a series of letters from debt collecting agencies, with court action because she had not paid the £6,665. Finally, it was only letters from me and, I suspect, the fear of Western Provident Association that I might raise the matter in the House which led the company to make an ex gratia payment to cover the costs of treatment. But now my constituent is faced with legal bills of £620 arising out of her need to defend herself against court action taken because of her alleged debt. Western Provident also refused to pay for the completion of the course of treatment on which she had started some time before. I believe that WPA is obliged not just to pay for the completion of the treatment but to meet the legal fees that this woman has incurred.

This is but one example of someone facing difficulties with private health care—the sort of system towards which the Government want to move. The logical outcome of what is proposed, with effect from 1 April, is that people will face this sort of appalling debt and the kind of hell through which my constituent went for more than two years.

I have heard it said that the Gulf war is taking the public eye off other Government domestic policies—on the NHS, education, community care and the economy—but I am sad to have to say that it will be the Gulf above all which will expose once and for all what the Government have done to the NHS.

5.35 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I often think that it is the small courtesies of this House which oil the wheels, and it is a courtesy, when a new Minister comes to the Dispatch Box for the first time, for his colleagues to wish him well. I am pleased but surprised that I should be the third speaker in the debate and yet be the first to welcome my right hon. Friend most warmly to his new job.

I assure the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), without the need for the slightest consultation with my colleagues or the Prime Minister, that the Conservative party did not encourage Saddam Hussein to invade Kuwait to get the Conservative Government off the hook.

What a shabby little motion the Opposition are having us debate tonight—heavy with emotion but light on facts, redolent with implication but divorced from reality. First, the motion mentions the closure of hospital beds. My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Haynes) rightly drew the attention of the House to the fact that, once again, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) had his facts wrong. The National Association of Health Authorities, in no way in the pocket of the Conservative party, says that 3,500 beds have been closed this year, not the 4,000 mentioned in the motion. The NAHA also draws attention to the fact that this therefore concerns 2 or 3 per cent. of all beds in the country. It drew the conclusion, moreover, that most of those closures occurred for medical or health policy reasons, such as new treatments requiring shorter stays.

The motion conveys, as it is intended to, an horrific picture of 4,000 sick people bodily thrown out of hospital beds or callously not put in them, but the important thing is not whether beds are closed but whether patients are treated. During many hospital visits, some to constituents, some to friends and some official, I have seen empty or near-empty wards while there has been plenty of capacity in the wards next door. If it is a matter of keeping such wards heated, lit, clean and staffed just for the look of it, I am against such a waste of health service resources. I cannot condone waste of resources, although I recognise that the Labour party can, and does.

Mr. Hayes: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dame Jill Knight: I am trying to make a short speech, but I shall allow one intervention.

Mr. Hayes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She referred to the Labour party. However, the Opposition do not seem to care too much about health, because not a single Opposition Back Bencher is here for their own debate.

Dame Jill Knight: At least let us be thankful that the two Front-Bench spokesmen are still here and sticking to their posts.

Mr. Hayes: But chatting between themselves.

Dame Jill Knight: Yes.

The motion does not claim that 4,000 people are desperate because they are not getting the care they need —even the Opposition know that such a claim is untrue —but that is the clear implication of the motion. It is important, therefore, to highlight the fact that more patients are being treated than ever before. About 25 per cent. more in-patients and about 50 per cent. more day or out-patients are being treated a year. One cannot complain about the closure of beds and imply that people are not being treated, while at the same time ignoring the fact that so many more people are being treated by means of far more complicated, and therefore much more expensive, operations and drugs than ever before.

The motion refers to the cancellation of hospital admissions from waiting lists. As new operations and better treatments come on stream, with the result that many people can be cured or can have their condition alleviated, which would have been impossible only a few years ago, the demand for treatment by these new means becomes heavier and heavier. As the capacity of the NHS to cure people increases, waiting lists also increase. A sum of money has been allocated for the specific purpose of reducing waiting lists; it amounts to £119 million over four years. It has enabled 500,000 additional patients to be treated, and waiting lists in many hospitals have been greatly reduced.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: And extra money is given to those hospitals.

Dame Jill Knight: Of course. It seems as though extra money is made available nearly every week.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Yes, it is.

Dame Jill Knight: When it comes to bed closures, it is easy to over-simplify the waiting list issue. Many waiting lists are false. When hospital administrators want to get people into hospital for their operations, they often find either that those people had their operations some months ago in another hospital or that they no longer need the operation. The waiting lists in many hospitals are known to be false, because those who were waiting to go into hospital do not always let the hospital know that they no longer need the bed.

[Dame Jill Knight]

It is also easy to over-simplify in another way. A 70-year-old who is waiting for a hip operation cannot be put into a maternity hospital bed, and a person who is waiting for a kidney transplant cannot be treated in an ear, nose and throat ward. It is useless to tie waiting lists to the allegation that people are denied the treatment they need. All hon. Members know of people in their constituencies who need hospital care. I am sure that they all do, as I do. When I find that treatment is urgently required, I get on to the doctor and ask why that person has not been admitted to hospital. I have never yet failed to get someone into hospital when that person genuinely needed to be admitted as an urgent case.

The motion raises its grubby little hands in horror at the very idea that any cash deficit should be other than written off; then it has the colossal cheek to demand a cash increase. We were asked why deficits can be written off if a hospital intends to go private but cannot be written off if it intends to remain within the national health service. Nothing would more greatly ensure the continuation of deficits than continually writing them off. If any hospital goes private, debts incurred after privatisation will no longer be the responsibility of the national health service. To suggest that all deficits in NHS hospitals should be written off would be to ask for trouble.

The Opposition had a colossal cheek in tabling this motion. First, they want more money to be spent on the NHS. However, they consistently refuse, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has done again today, to say how much money they would make available to the NHS. We say that we must make X, Y or Z amounts of money available, but the Opposition will never say how much they would make available. Let them shut up until they can answer that question.

Secondly, the Opposition conveniently ignore the enormous amount of additional money that the Government have poured into the NHS. If the allegations made by some Opposition Members—that the Government want the NHS to wither away—were true, I do not believe that we should have poured money into the NHS, as we have done so magnificently, over so many years. We have done that every year since we came to power.

Opposition Members may not like it, but I must remind them that, when they left office, only about £8 billion each year was being spent on the NHS. That figure has risen to over £30 billion a year. How, in heaven's name, that can be described as a cut, I do not know. Even after taking inflation into account, NHS funding has increased by about 50 per cent. I do not know how the Opposition can have the brass neck to demand that the Government ought to provide more money for the NHS. The increase in NHS resources that has been provided by the Government has been described as peanuts. To my mind, £22 billion is a pretty hefty peanut.

Thirdly, it is a cheek for the Opposition to couch their motion in these words, because they spent infinitely less on the NHS when they were in office. I wonder what would have happened to those people whose cases have been described by Opposition Members if a Labour Government had been in power. For the first time, cuts were made under a Labour Administration. What about the lady whose sad case was described by the hon. Member for Livingston? We were all shocked to hear it, but how would she have got on? The case of another lady aged 79, suffering from kidney disease, was described to us and the implication was that it was this wicked Government who had caused her death. I am very sorry that the lady died, but I cannot think that the blame can all be placed at the Government's door when a 79-year-old lady with severe kidney problems dies. I believe that she would have had infinitely less chance of survival had she had the misfortune to be sick under a Labour Administration.

The fourth reason why it is a cheek to ask the Government to increase the amount of cash for the NHS is that the Opposition consistently oppose all our efforts to end waste of cash by the NHS. Time and again I have attended these debates and listened to the reasons why amendments and different arrangements are being introduced in order to stop the waste that everybody connected with the health service knows has gone on for years. We have tried to stop that waste and have been very successful. However, every time we have tried in any way, shape or form, the Labour party has fought us tooth and nail.

The motion refers to "imposing" self-governing trusts, but hospitals have to apply to become self-governing. How can one have something imposed on one if it has to be applied for and if certain stringent conditions have to be met? Again, the motion is inaccurate. There can be no imposition of self-governing trusts when the management have to demonstrate what skills they have, what benefits would accrue to patients, and other things. I can well understand that the Confederation of Health Service Employees does not like it, because it might curb the wings of the militants and, Lord knows, there are enough militants in COHSE.

To say in the motion that the public are against self-governing trusts is quite wrong. They are strongly in favour of hospitals becoming local entities again and they love the idea of hospitals choosing what they want to do and perhaps having a matron again if they so wish. That pleases many people, but the Labour party does not wish to know that. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Hughes) does not know anything about hospitals, he should try to learn before attending a debate. As you are aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the most successful hospitals in Birmingham has a matron. The public know that, approve of it and would like to see more matrons.

I want to refer to the new burdens that will be imposed on the health service as a result of the Gulf war. That is a more up-to-date topic than this tired old rubbishy motion, and it touches on the comments in our amendment about putting patients first, and on what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his speech. Some constituents are worried about the effect of the Gulf war on patient care in this country and possible casualties taking hospital beds. We made a decision in the House yesterday with an overwhelming majority—one of the largest majorities I can remember in recent years—to follow the United Nations line, and that may mean that casualties will have to come here. However, there are base hospitals in the Gulf and, as I understand it, there are six or eight service hospitals in this country ready and waiting to receive service personnel who may be injured.

Let us be frank: soldiers, airmen or service women who are injured in the Gulf have every right to expect to be treated in British hospitals. They have as much right as

motorway accident victims or any other victim. We must recognise that. We do not know what will happen, but we must face the fact that if there were, heaven forfend, large numbers of casualties from the Gulf, there could be an effect on non-emergency cases here. I must stress that it will affect only non-emergency cases. I believe that my right hon. Friend said that it does not alter the position of emergency cases in this country, and he referred to the fact that extra money is being made available to cope with the problem.

No one on either side of the House is complacent or entirely satisfied with every aspect of the health service. We care just as much as Opposition Members when people need medical care and cannot immediately obtain it. Let us have that out of the way.

Let us also have out of the way the accusation that we are trying to get rid of the health service. Far from it. We are as dedicated to the principle as any Opposition Member. I believe that Britain has a health service second to none for its expertise, easy availability and effectiveness. The Opposition constantly seek to belittle or misrepresent it but their ill-judged attacks cannot overcome the solid experience of those who have sampled health service care. The hon. Member for Livingston has only condemnation, but patients have appreciation, gratitude and understanding. It is the motion that should be condemned, not the Government.

5.55 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I shall be brief, and I shall not pursue all the points raised by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). She backed up some of her points with argument, and she justified some with facts, but by no means all. In opening the debate today, the new Secretary of State struck a different tone from his predecessor and seems, rather like the new Prime Minister, to be opting consciously for a quieter tone, if not a quieter approach. As far as it went, that is welcome to those of us who have been used to the at times dismissive attitude of his predecessor. However, essentially his song remains the same, albeit dressed up in rather more theoretical packaging than we have been used to from his more street-fighting predecessor when he was at the Dispatch Box.

The Secretary of State addressed the points raised by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about bed closures. The hon. Member for Edgbaston went on to defend the Government's position as she saw it, and criticised the figures in the motion and the arguments behind them. The hon. Member for Edgbaston criticised the Labour party's motion, because it specified a figure of 4,000 beds lost. She told us that the true figure was 3,500, as if that was a vindication of the Government's position. —*[Interruption.]* I accept that that figure is from the report of the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts. The House will understand that the hon. Member for Livingston does not consult me when he drafts his motions, but I think that the figure of 4,000 was from *The Independent* newspaper survey published in the same week as the report.

As the hon. Member for Edgbaston said, whether the number of beds lost is 3,000 or 4,000, it represents 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. of all acute beds in the country. How can any of us be sanguine about that when we all know of the waiting lists about which our constituents write to us and about the operations that they are waiting for and the countinuing physical discomfort, pain and sense of frustration that they feel when they encounter such a position? It is a pretty weak case for the hon. Member for Edgbaston to say that it represents "only" 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. of acute beds and that it is "only" 3,500 as opposed to 4,000.

It is worth putting that in the context of the Government's record since 1979. On that basis, over 70,000 beds have been lost from the 1979 United Kingdom total. That represents over 16 per cent. of all NHS beds, and it is an alarming figure. Upwards of one fifth of our NHS bed provision has gone during the lifetime of this Government.

As well as the facts themselves, there is an aspect of the interpretation of the facts with which I wish to take issue with the hon. Member for Edgbaston. She said that we must look at numbers treated. I agree with her to a large extent, and the hon. Member for Livingston acknowledged that too. However, we must not allow the numbers treated to disguise the fact that, all too often, other pressures or considerations are creating the larger numbers being treated, making it look as if there is an improvement when it might be something else.

I give the hon. Gentleman two examples. First, we must judge the quality of care that is being provided, not just its rapidity. At times, those two concepts cannot, by definition, work together. A rush to get people out of available post-operative beds so that other people in the queue can use them may mean elderly people having to return to homes that have less than satisfactory standards of care.

The quality of care is important, but, secondly, if that quality of care and post-hospital care is not sufficient, all too often it leads to the revolving-door syndrome, when the same person is readmitted for further treatment or because of additional complications or a recurrence of the original problem. The readmittance of that patient counts as a further treatment statistic, which is then trumpeted by the Minister as further evidence of the success of the Government's health policy. In many cases, the readmittance of that patient represents a failure of health care, but he has clocked up a further treatment point for NHS statistics. Those two major caveats weaken the case of the hon. Member for Edgbaston.

The figures on underfunding provided by NAHA—there has been no question of trying to discredit that organisation in previous debates—are alarming. I shall not cite all the statistics for the cumulative period of the past decade, but it estimates underfunding of the health service at about £3·25 billion. That is a substantial amount of money, and I notice that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is nodding in agreement. He is a long-standing member of the Select Committee on Social Services. Some years ago, I served on that Committee with him, and we undertook an analysis of real-terms growth expenditure in health care, as set against perceived need. We arrived at a distressing shortfall in aspiration and in what was being delivered. That earlier experience, taken with the up-to-date figures, shows that there is far more of a problem than the hon. Member for Edgbaston was willing to acknowledge.

Hon. Members have mentioned the dreadful circumstances in the Gulf. I wish to raise an item that was not dealt with satisfactorily—off-stage noises were being made

[Mr. Charles Kennedy]

by several hon. Members who are no longer present—concerning the role of the private sector, about which I wrote to the Secretary of State last week. Tragically, we are now on a national war footing, and it appears that we shall be involved in military conflict sooner rather than later.

It is right—I voted with the majority last night—that the best provision should be made for service personnel who return home injured and in need of treatment. If any of our troops are injured in carrying out their instructions with courage and skill, the whole country, irrespective of the divisions on the rights or wrongs of them being sent to the Gulf, will want the best possible standards of care to be made available to them. There can be no serious debate or argument about that.

The Secretary of State said that he has taken steps to encourage the provision of national health service beds and that, contractually, it is for health authorities to take decisions on available private sector provision in their areas; but that is not good enough. I do not say that from an ideological standpoint of being anti-private sector, but if the Government are being consistent and are saying, as they do in so many cases, that there should be more mutual understanding, cross-exchange of information and co-operation between the private medical sector and the public sector, on an issue as fundamental as military conflict, with injured troops returning home, the private sector should subscribe to that aspect of Government policy and should co-operate.

If the Government can requisition boats, buildings and other private-sector installations, there is no logical reason why, similarly, ministerial action cannot be taken to requisition, where appropriate or relevant, private sector health facilities. The private sector in health care would do its public reputation some good if, rather than awaiting calls in Parliament for it to be seen to be involved or for the Minister to require it to be involved, it volunteered some of its facilities. However, we should leave the ideological sparring match between public and private health provision to one side and agree that all medical facilities should be regarded as legitimate for use in the war effort.

My understanding of the instructions that have been sent to general managers is that, as and when injured personnel return home from the Gulf, hospitals in London, in the major southern cities and military hospitals in the south will be used first and that provision will slowly spread north to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness—I welcome Inverness's contribution in that respect. Given that geographical spread and the strain which the Secretary of State has acknowledged will be put on health service facilities, surely it would make sense to spread that burden as equally and fairly as possible.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I understand that general practitioners who are called up for service in the Gulf receive simply their Army emoluments, and must provide a locum in their practice from their own pockets. It is wrong that medical practitioners who disrupt their careers to serve their country should be financially out of pocket. The Minister should comment on that.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Hon. Members will have received direct representations or anecdotal evidence on that from their constituents. That follows the earlier points that I was making about some aspects of the dreadful problem in the Gulf. I hope that the Minister will take a few minutes to reply to that point, because the Secretary of State did not deal with it to a great extent. I share the sentiment that my right hon. Friend expressed.

There is no doubt that the treatment of casualties from the Gulf will place strain on the NHS. The Secretary of State has said that he will probably need to secure extra funding from the Treasury, and he will receive full all-party support for that. However, health authorities will have to take day-to-day decisions now without knowing what funding will be required, and the pressure on them will be greater because of that.

Will the Minister for Health comment on the suggestion that health authorities have been told to plan on the basis that, on average, Gulf casualties will need to be hospitalised for 12 days? I should be grateful if she would tell me whether the Department of Health has given those instructions and that advice to health managers. If so, it is widely optimistic, given the nature of some of the injuries that could be sustained, not least from burns. I hope that the Department of Health will keep that aspect closely under review.

I have concentrated on the Gulf in my remarks, apart from my opening comments on the general level of underfunding and the general problems caused by bed losses in the hospital service. Although we heard more of a theoretical framework from the Secretary of State, there is unambiguous evidence that we still need much more in terms of practical delivery so that the hospital sector can begin to come up to the standard which the country needs and which, according to every available test of public opinion, the country clearly wants but does not believe it is getting from the Conservative Administration.

6.10 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on his constructive and measured contribution. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will respond as much as she can to his somewhat detailed but relevant questions to the House and to the Treasury Bench.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State referred to the sombre occasion of the debate, and we would all agree with him. As the Member for Macclesfield, I wish to pay tribute to those members of the Territorial Army division of the Royal Army Medical Corps in my constituency who volunteered to go to the Gulf and are serving there. I know from my regular contact with them that they are courageous, able and highly skilled and will do a wonderful job should casualties occur.

My district general hospital has been asked to accept a number of casualties. I know from my discussions with the local health authority chairman that they will be well looked after and will receive the best possible treatment. They will be welcomed to Macclesfield, where there is quite a military tradition.

This is a sombre debate. Whatever statistics and facts are bandied about by both sides of the House, problems face the national health service. It is incumbent on all hon. Members to reflect those problems as accurately as possible. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not deal with the deficits for the current financial year

faced by health authorities before the new system comes into operation on 1 April. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware that many of those deficits arose because of the clawback of resources to meet the capital requirements resulting from the health authorities' failure to sell land which they had intended to sell prior to the capital contract beginning or because the price drop caused by the current economic situation meant that the money expected from the sale of land did not materialise. The Government must look at the deficits of some health authorities and take action so that they do not go forward from 1 April with millstones around their necks.

Some closures of hospital wards and beds have occurred because of improvements in medical techniques. For some operations people do not now have to stay overnight in hospital. There was some substance in the criticism by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) about the number of beds that have been closed. I wish to refer not to the statistics from the National Association of Health Authorities but to Macclesfield district general hospital, where 50 beds have been closed but there is a waiting list for urgent surgery. Because the beds have been closed, people cannot have the operations that would give them a more meaningful life or reduce their suffering and pain.

As I said during Health questions, it is a false economy to build a wonderful new district general hospital—I pay credit to the Government for providing the wherewithal—only to have to close beds because of its success and because of the skill and expertise of the consultants who carried out many more operations than was originally budgeted for. Success should be rewarded, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) agrees. It cannot be satisfactory, financially or medically, to have 50 empty beds in a hospital when people are waiting for operations, theatres are available and consultants are ready to carry them out. It is a false economy and a terrible waste of capital expenditure to provide those beds in the first place.

I do not often pay tribute to the chairman of the Mersey regional health authority, Sir Donald Wilson, but I must this time. He has achieved the greatest reduction in waiting lists in any region, and Macclesfield health authority has achieved the biggest reduction in waiting lists in the Mersey region. I pay tribute to the management, consultants, nurses, paramedics and other staff in Macclesfield who achieved that splendid result.

Parkside hospital, which is close to my heart, deals with mental illness. I have often pleaded in the House for a moratorium on the closure of beds or of mental illness hospitals until adequate resources, facilities and qualified personnel are available to deal with those discharged into the community from those and other hospitals.

The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye mentioned my service on the then Social Services Select Committee which highlighted in several reports the ongoing underfunding of the national health service. I shall not go into the substantial underfunding that occurred under the last Labour Government, but I shall refer to underfunding between 1981 and 1985 under the present Government. I do not believe that it was intentional Government policy; it occurred because the Treasury and the then Department of Health and Social Services underestimated demographic changes and advances in medical techniques and medical science, which meant that much more expensive, sophisticated operations could take place, and did not budget for them. There was a huge advance in the use of magnetic resonance scanners and computerised tomography scanners, for example, which can do so much not only in tracing illness but in enabling surgeons and consultants to carry out successful surgery.

I should like to refer to self-governing trust status, about which much has been said by the Opposition and a little by Conservative Members. Nursing morale in my constituency is low and consultants are worried because of the problems facing the health service and bed closures and because they know that they could put people into beds and carry out operations but no money is available to do so because of the number of recent changes in the health service and the speed with which changes have occurred.

From the representations made to me by consultants, nurses, members of the public and general practitioners, I am led to believe that there is general support in my area for the principle of self-governing trust status. But those to whom I have spoken want self-governing status for the district as a whole.

The chairman of the regional health authority, Sir Donald Wilson, always appears to want to have his own way. We have various levels of health government—the Mersey region, and Macclesfield health authority—and I thought that the decision to go for trust status would lie with the management at district level, with the people served by the district general hospital and with the nurses, consultants, general practitioners and others involved with the provision of health care locally. Oh no; it appears that the region is demanding not only that there should be the acute unit seeking self-governing trust status but that the community and mental health services should form a second self-governing trust. I strongly oppose that. I am already in communication with the Secretary of State. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend or my hon. Friend the Minister for Health will be prepared to see me but I have formally asked my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to discuss the matter with me because a substantial majority of those involved in health care in my constituency believe that patient care and the best interests of those who want to use the health service in my area would benefit from a single self-governing trust covering the district health authority as a whole. I look forward to meeting the Minister or the Secretary of State.

I am advised that, in my area, there is some problem in dealing with nurses who have taken advantage of the new structure to upgrade themselves from state enrolled nurses to state registered nurses. In all the cases that have been drawn to my attention, nurses were promised that they would be given positions when they obtained the new qualifications. Unfortunately, no such positions are now being offered to them. Some have been offered redundancy but the redundancy payments for which they qualify do not take account of their new qualifications. Bearing in mind the promises that were made when the new system came into being—many hon. Members on both sides of the House warmly welcomed it—I hope that, in her winding-up speech, or perhaps by letter, my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give me information and assurances that I can pass to my constituents, who are deeply concerned.

The health service is close and dear to the hearts of all the people of this country. The health service and health care must never become the preserve and privilege of the

[Mr. Nicholas Winterton]

wealthy. They must be available for all the people of this country. I, as a Conservative Member, must express my concern about the implications and possible results of some of the changes that we are introducing. I believe that we are going towards the North American system at the very time when the Americans are turning away from their system and looking to us with some envy.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Rubbish.

Mr. Winterton: My hon. Friend may say, "Rubbish." I shall not give way to her because she has not been present for the whole debate. I have served on the Select Committee on Social Services for 16 years without a break. I have met a great many people who take advantage of, and are interested in, health care. As a member of that Committee, I have had the privilege of travelling widely throughout the world. Having travelled throughout Europe and North America, I can only say that the United Kingdom national health service is the best and most comprehensive health care service in the world, and provides the very best value for money, despite the problems that it faces. It is in that spirit that I address my remarks to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

6.24 pm

Mr. John Hughes (Coventry, North-East): It is appropriate that this debate on the national health service —in particular, that part of the service known as the hospital and community health service—should take place now. The possibility of war in the Gulf should not be allowed to overshadow what is happening to the NHS. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, those in the media and members of the public at large would be well advised to take special note of what is said, because the hospital and community health service has never been less well prepared than it is now to cater for the additional demands that war will place on it. When I say that it is less well prepared, I do not mean that our doctors do not have the necessary ability, our nurses the necessary skills or our health workers the necessary compassion. I mean simply that the NHS does not have the money.

The Minister may be surprised at that remark. After all, he has not been the incumbent of his present post for very long, and, being less dependent on the NHS than many of my constituents, particularly many elderly people, he has not perhaps had time to realise the dreadful state to which the health service may have been reduced. Given the many distractions of the past few months—for example, the considerable Christmas cheer brought to many by the unseating of the previous Prime Minister, who was the jockey principally responsible for riding the NHS into the ground—it is not surprising that the right hon. Gentleman has not yet been able to discern what is happening to the service for which he is responsible. He has not perhaps discerned that the service is collapsing.

Even before Christmas, a newspaper reported that 4,500 beds—equal to 3 per cent. of acute beds—had been closed in an attempt to make ends meet. But that is only the tip of the iceberg. As the end of the year approached, more desperate measures were taken. Over the Christmas period, we heard of extensive ward closures, with hospitals reduced to emergency-only treatment. The closures were often described as extended breaks, but the truth is that every week during which a ward is closed represents a 2 per cent. cut in the annual service provided by that ward. For many hospitals, a three-week Christmas interval replaced a one-week interval. That meant a 4 per cent. reduction in non-urgent activity. That was still not enough.

A recent Audit Commission report highlighted the importance of day surgery work, arguing strongly that day surgery meant that more cases could be handled by the NHS at a lower unit cost. It is certainly true that medical developments have enabled certain types of patient to be treated in greater numbers. Contrary to the view that the Government have attempted to foster, the ability to treat people effectively on a day basis has been the result of scientific and medical advance and improvements in medical procedures. It has not come about through the intervention of accountants, much less politicians. The credit for the developments in day surgery—and the reductions in the average length of in-patient stays resulting from improvements to treatments—lies with the NHS staff and medical researchers. They have come about in spite of—not because of—the Government's policies.

No better illustration of that point exists than the fact that the day surgery unit at Coventry and Warwickshire hospital in my own city has had to be closed for the remaining three months of the year. The authority has run out of cash. As a result, it is expected to be able to complete only 990 operations this year—only slightly more than half of what was achieved in former years.

The cumulative effect of thousands of crises such as that —some of which reach the public eye and some of which are buried in the private part of the health authority agenda—is likely to take the NHS waiting list over the 1 million mark for the first time in the history of the service, and that is before we take account of the impact of war in the Gulf.

Like the Government, I have been guilty of concentrating on the acute side of the health service coin —the operations and waiting lists. We should not forget the far more devastating effect on the services for the less privileged in our society, including those whose health is in one way or another permanently impaired and whose dependence on the NHS is not intermittent. In that group, I include large numbers of chronically ill elderly patients, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped and the physically disabled. The number of beds available to those patients has fallen dramatically over the past 10 years. According to the Government's only published figures, the number of non-acute beds has fallen from 213,000 in 1979 to 149,000 today, a fall of 64,000.

Ironically, a patient discharged from one of those beds —perhaps prematurely and possibly in need of constant care rather than intervention—could be readmitted later, as the condition may have deteriorated. That patient will duly increase the Government's figure of the number of in-patients treated.

The prospects for that kind of patient are now bleaker. April 1991 will see the establishment of the first trusts, and the prospects are clearly so horrendous that the Government have chosen to throw a cloak of secrecy over the whole business. Whole chunks of what the Government claim will still be part of the NHS are subject to the rules of commercial confidentiality. As a

consequence, the elected representatives of constituents cannot see a report commissioned by the Government about the financial plans for the trusts.

We have to be content with rumours that the report suggested that the financial plans were, to say the least, inadequate. It is rumoured that some of the more sensible civil servants may have advised the Secretary of State that the majority of trust applicants were unfit to run a whelk stall. Sadly, we cannot undertake our own analysis of the financial plans, because the trust applicants were forbidden to publish them. That in turn means that the Government expressly sanctioned a consultation exercise in which not only were staff ballots forbidden and community views discounted, but the communities were even forbidden to know what they were being consulted over, and they are not to be told now of the outcome. Having learned nothing, the farce is being repeated for another wave of misguided applicants. There is no sign, as all hon. Members are aware, of how the system will work in reality.

There has been much talk in recent years about improving the management of the health service. It is clear that the people responsible for the NHS White Paper are not managers: they are solicitors skilled in drawing up that which no one can understand and which never does what it is supposed to do. Its strategy would be to the detriment of my constituents.

6.33 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): It is a poor day for the Labour party when we have a Supply day debate on a major aspect of Government policy—the health service—and at one stage only the shadow Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), represented the Labour party in the Chamber. No Opposition Back-Benchers were present. The Labour Whips had to trawl round the streets, the bars and tearooms to drag in Opposition Members to say something and to show how desperately caring is the Labour party. That has been exposed—mercifully we have television and people outside will be able to see what happened.

I do not pretend for a moment that all is rosy in the national health service. Of course it is not. My right hon. and hon. Friends are aware of the terrible difficulties in my health authority in west Essex and I hope that those problems are being addressed at the moment.

However, this is a Supply day and as such we have a right to know what the Opposition are going to do. After all, the Opposition's health policy has been published for a year and a month, but we are none the wiser and we are not better informed.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): That is because the hon. Gentleman cannot read.

Mr. Hayes: I have read Labour's health policy, but we did not hear anything about it today. We have heard about cumulative underfunding and how the health service needs more money. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Livingston did not tell us how much is needed, either because he does not know or because he is frightened of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). I do not know what it is that ladies from Derbyshire do to hon. Members, but the hon. Member for Derby, South seems to frighten the hon. Member for Livingston. He would not tell us how much he was going to spend or where he was going to spend it.

However, the hon. Member for Livingston was marvellous when he referred to history. He did for the history of the funding of the health service what King Herod did for babysitting. The hon. Gentleman told us that the Conservative Government have a habit of spending more on defence than on the health service. The Library was kind enough to provide me with the figures. In 1970-71 and 1971-72, defence spending was higher than health spending. At that time a Conservative Government was taking over from a Labour Government. From 1972-73 to 1975-76 health spending was higher than defence spending. In 1976-77, 1977-78 and 1978-79, defence spending was higher. From 1986 onwards this Government have been spending more on health than on defence. The hon. Member for Livingston did not tell the House about the massive cuts made in health spending by the last Labour Government. They cut 3 per cent. from the budget in real terms.

The hon. Gentleman did not tell us about the unions. He was right to tell us that the debate is about money and I know where he would have to spend the money that the hon. Member for Derby, South might just give him. He would have to spend it on his friends in the Confederation of Health Service Employees and in the National Union of Public Employees.

The hon. Member for Livingston should read the debates on health that took place during the dying days of the previous Labour Government. Those debates were not about patient care; they were about the disasters that were occurring in the system when the dead were unburied and hospital waiting lists made our present problems look like a teddy bears' picnic. If the hon. Member for Livingston reads those debates, he will see that they referred to formulas and face-savers to help NUPE and COHSE in an attempt to get those people to see reason.

However, I was encouraged in some respects by the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston. There are signs of good sense in the Opposition's motion. The hon. Member for Livingston did not refer to opting out and that is very encouraging. I imagine that he now accepts that there is no such thing as an opting-out hospital. He referred to self-governing trusts and that is a step in the right direction. He did not talk about hidden agendas, which was very good, and he did not talk about privatisation. He did not talk about money either.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): What is the hon. Gentleman talking about? *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Hayes: I will give that one to the hon. Gentleman on points.

There have been some exciting reforms which have been overwhelmingly—80 per cent.—accepted by the medical and caring professions. The NHS has been lurching from crisis to crisis since it began in the 1940s because of the antiquated and ridiculous methods of funding. This Government have the courage to change that.

The hon. Member for Livingston referred to the efficiency trap. The efficiency trap will stop when money travels with the patient. The present problem is to help the health authorities with particular difficulties to balance their budgets before April. That is a problem that my right hon. and hon. Friends must address.

[Mr. Hayes]

We were all delighted and reassured to hear that money will be given to hospitals such as my own in west Essex and Harlow for beds to be allocated to Gulf casualties. However, several health authorities, including my own, will not be able to balance their budgets in April. There is a great danger that some of them might do things that would be quite unconscionable and wrong and add to waiting lists to balance their budgets. That matter must be discussed.

I am not asking for vast sums to be poured into the regions. Usually, a region messes up the money in the first place. The Government provide enormous resources—something for which the hon. Gentleman should have given my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State credit. The hon. Gentleman did not talk about the extra £3 billion. He did not talk about the real-terms increase of 5·3 per cent. across the board. That is a great deal of money. He will say that it is not enough, and so will some of my constituents. It will never be enough. It is a significant, sizeable chunk of taxpayers' money. He did not talk about the £1·9 billion—a 6 per cent. increase in the hospital budget.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hayes: I should love to give way, but the winding-up speeches are a minute away. I am terribly sorry, but it would not be fair to those who are to wind up the debate.

There is much that I should like to say about my district, but I do not have time to do so. All that I am trying to put across to the House is that at least the Government have the courage to put forward policies which, in the long term, will make the future of the health service much more rosy. The Government will help with waiting lists. The hon. Member for Livingston and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must address a matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) mentioned—the terrible problem of capital projects. For one reason or another, capital projects from land sales fell by about 50 per cent. in the past year. That will cause tremendous revenue problems, particularly in the Thames region and certain areas of the north. There is no reason whatever why the Treasury cannot appraise some of the schemes that have revenue consequences, and sort out some form of mortgage arrangement so that the taxpayer, the patient and the health authority do not lose out. That is a perfectly sensible financial arrangement, and it should be considered.

The debate has been about money—money that will be spent on NUPE and COHSE—and has had nothing to do with patient care. It is rather sad that the hon. Member for Livingston said much about the producer and people being paid. He said nothing about more patients being treated with the money that he wants to give the health service.

6.42 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): The two most striking aspects of the debate have been, first, the extent of the pain and suffering that people must undergo because they cannot get the treatment they need because of the hospital crisis and, secondly, the absolute refusal of the Government and the new Secretary of State to acknowledge that pain and suffering. The message is clear—the Government are pretending that the hospital crisis does not exist, because they are not prepared to act to end the crisis on our hospitals. The pain, anxiety and suffering are only too real.

For example, baby Sarah Goodings needs a kidney operation, yet, for the third time last week, her operation at Guy's hospital was cancelled. Without an operation, she must constantly be on antibiotics or risk permanent damage to her kidneys. Her doctor has been told that he is able to operate only one afternoon a week, to help Guy's hospital save money.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Harman: I shall not give way, because I must be brief. The hon. Lady has not been present during the debate to which I am trying to respond; she has only just arrived.

It is not only waiting lists that are being hit by the crisis. Even emergency patients are being hit by the crisis. Doctors are having to struggle to get even emergency patients into hospital, because ambulances are being diverted from hospital to hospital as more and more hospitals go on red alert.

The Secretary of State talked about bad management in the health service. Does he know what health service managers are doing? They are not managing the health service; they are managing a crisis. They are sitting at their desks with two piles of letters in their out-trays. One pile contains standard letters to patients saying, "Don't come in for your operation. Don't come in for your long-awaited out-patient visit. The operation is cancelled. The out-patient clinic is cancelled because of lack of funds." The other pile contains letters to GPs saying, "Don't send in any patients; we are short of funds. Cancel your out-patients' clinics and reduce your operating lists."

Tens of thousands of patients are receiving standard printed letters from district health authorities telling them that their out-patient appointments or their operations have been cancelled. Each time one of those letters arrives on the mat, there is more misery and disappointment for individuals and their families. It is extraordinary what fortitude and resilience some people show when waiting for their operations. Why should they have to suffer 24-hour pain and suffering? Why should there be stresses and strains on their families? Why should their jobs be threatened or put at risk when they need to be admitted to hospital to have an operation that could sort them out? Why should people have to lead their lives overshadowed by pain? It is because the Government are telling health authorities to balance their books so that they can operate like businesses.

Such cuts are not only cruel but stupid and a false economy. The longer a patient waits for a hip replacement—my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) referred to just such a case—the bigger the operation is and the lower the chances of making a complete recovery. It does not make financial or medical sense to make patients wait. The longer a heart patient waits for an operation, the less likely he or she is to survive.

According to an article in *The Daily Telegraph*, Mr. Tony Lees Jones, aged 59, has a leaky aortic valve. The results are fluid build-up in the lungs, breathlessness and increasing strain on an enlarged heart, and the longer the

condition continues without an operation the greater the risk of permanent damage. The longer someone has to wait, the lower the chances of success. We should be concerned about the outcome of health care, rather than simply act like accountants and look at the balance sheet in the short term.

The Secretary of State talked about a new agenda for a health care strategy. He mentioned preventive health care. The menopause clinic in Dulwich hospital treats menopausal women who suffer from osteoporosis. It treats them with hormone replacement therapy and therefore reduces the chances of broken bones. That clinic has been cut. As a result, more women will suffer from osteoporosis, break their bones and end up in an already overcrowded hospital as emergency patients.

What about the family planning service—an obvious preventive service? Family planning services are cut, and as a result there is an alarming rise in the number of unplanned teenage pregnancies. My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) asked me to draw to the attention of the House the fact that, in his area, the school eye service—a preventive service if ever there was one—has been cut because of a shortage of money. Does the Secretary of State know that preventive services have been cut? Does he defend cuts in preventive services? Does he even know that cuts in preventive services are happening?

It is crisis management in the national health service, and it is making the national health service less efficient. Health service managers cannot plan from year to year —they cannot even plan from month to month. In some districts, they cannot even plan from day to day, as they try to manage the crisis, and that makes the health service less efficient.

The Secretary of State has said that there has been bad management, but does he know what his Department is asking managers to do? I have a copy of a circular from the district general manager of Bromley, David Milner, addressed to geriatricians about marketing geriatric services. It says that they must look to understanding and assessing the markets, determining pricing policies—that is what managers are doing—and understanding customers and their behaviour.

Of course, by "customers" he does not mean geriatric patients but the purchasing authorities who will be trying to beat the price down. He talks about communication with customers and advertising and promotion policies. That is what managers in the National Health Service are doing. They are not trying to improve preventive services or to reduce waiting lists; they are trying to cut the deficits and commercialise the national health service.

I am disappointed that the Secretary of State has been peddling the same old myth of his predecessor that somehow we agree with the Government about their attempts to dismantle the health service and to introduce an internal market. We do not agree with them. We do not want to see hospitals competing on cost. We do not want patients to be denied choice as they are sent to the hospital where the cheapest contract has been placed by the district health authority. We are against that. If he is an honest man, I hope that the Secretary of State will stop peddling that myth.

Yes, as the Secretary of State said, there is a consensus between the Labour party and the public, and the Government are outside it. Despite the fact that there has been a change of face on the Government Front Bench, it is a pity that there seems to have been no change of heart on the health service. People want to hear that the Government recognise the problem, that they accept their responsibility and that they are determined to solve the problem that is causing pain and suffering to so many people. We have not heard that from the Government.

6.51 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): We have heard again tonight the traditional rant of doom and gloom from the Labour party—scaremongering, lowering morale and uttering irrelevance. Before the main part of my reply I refer the Opposition to a recent *New Statesman* article which said that it is time to realise that

"the real agenda for health policy . . . must be about making better, more informed decisions about what it is worth buying with the £30 billion we are already spending each year. So the absence of a really convincing means for moving resources out of their historical grooves amounts to a serious flaw in Labour's proposals . . . To continue with a system where service providers determine spending priorities is unacceptable. Until Labour can be more convincing about shifting the balance of power it will have failed to address the central challenge for health policy."

We agree with the *New Statesman*.

Many of my hon. Friends have ably and articulately identified the reforms that we are trying to make in the health service. We are proud of the record investment of resources; £30 billion next year is a remarkable achievement. But we do not think that money is the only way to success. Better health for the nation is the outcome which we want to achieve.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State outlined his strategy for health, on which we should all agree. It is irrelevant and ridiculous of the Labour party to try to pursue old hares rather than co-operate and collaborate on the real challenges and opportunities which we face. The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) talked about cataracts. In 10 years, the number of cataract operations has increased from 40,000 to 92,000. There has been an increase in the number of hip replacement operations and in the number of coronary artery by-pass operations. Above all, we have seen an increase in the number of people who work for the health service. We have seen a dramatic increase in the number of hospital doctors and general practitioners, so that each GP's list has come down.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: And nurses.

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes. My hon. Friend, who always supports matron, will be pleased about the increase in nurses. Not only are there more but they are much better paid. Their basic pay has gone up by over 41 per cent. Hon. Members should compare that with what happened under the Labour Government when it fell by 5 per cent.

We want to invest in our staff, not only through pay but through training and qualifications. That is why I was so pleased last week to announce an extra £71 million for Project 2000, which will make it possible to start 14 new schemes for nurses. The total of approved colleges of nursing will be 44, and half of our new nurses will have Project 2000 qualifications.

Hon. Members should note not only the professional but the vocational qualifications that we are bringing in for people who work and serve in the health service. They should note, too, the progress we are making with junior hospital doctors. We want to be a good employer. We

[Mrs. Bottomley]

want to serve patients, and we want to work with and for our staff. Bringing down the unacceptable, onerous rotas that generations of doctors had to live with under the Labour Government will be a major breakthrough. An extra 200 consultants and 50 more staff grade posts will help urgently to tackle that problem.

We are investing in research because, in our great health service, research and development are fundamental. The recent appointment of Professor Michael Peckham as the director of research and development is a great step forward. Only this week, we announced an extra £5·8 million to increase postgraduate training and education. About £1·5 billion is spent each year on health research in the United Kingdom. We want to get the best benefit from that. We want to improve quality. That is why we are spending £30 million on clinical audit. That shows that we are not just looking for the turnover of beds. We want quality and better patient care. That is the way forward.

We have to accept the problem of waiting lists, to which many of my hon. Friends referred. We are pleased that the number waiting for more than a year has been reduced by 7 per cent. this year. That is important. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a £35 million initiative, building on the work that John Yates has done and that we have been doing to tackle the problem of people who have to wait an unnacceptable length of time.

There is an important distinction. Half the patients are admitted immediately. People are admitted on the basis of clinical priority. Of those who are taken off waiting lists, half wait five weeks. Some wait an unacceptable length of time. How pleased I am that Macclesfield is leading the way in coping with the problem. The chairman of Mersey region has shown an admirable example by deciding not to put up with long waiting lists. We fully endorse the move to deal with people who have to wait an unacceptable length of time.

I want also to address the subject of beds. Listening to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), one would think that he was trying to be a shadow Minister of beds and warehousing, because of his preoccupation with beds in the health service. We have over 200,000 non-psychiatric beds. We have recently been censured by the Audit Commission for not moving to more day work. The introduction of endoscopes, laproscopes and all sorts of diagnostic techniques, which mean that we do not have to admit patients, has doubled bed occupancy in recent years. We have to do more. Certainly, at times, beds have closed because of financial pressure, but it is naive to think that that is the only reason for bed closures. Health authorities which have treated bed closure as an easy option when under financial pressure need to plan more carefully to balance their activity and their resources. That is the secret of the reforms that we are establishing in the health service, so that we can be rid of the perverse form of funding where, although a good hospital attracts more patients, the funding does not come with them. The reforms which we are seeking will ensure that resources are used to the best possible effect.

Following my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's comments about this being a sober occasion, several hon. Members referred to the plans for the NHS response to casualties from possible fighting in the Gulf. Very careful, detailed planning has been taking place. All the regions are prepared to receive casualties. Casualties will go to each region in turn, as suggested by hon. Members. We are confident that all possible steps have been taken. Although our plans are not predictions, much care and thought have gone into them. I know that hon. Members welcomed the statement by my right hon. Friend that we will receive additional funding for that purpose.

A great deal is achieved by our excellent health service. It is a service to be proud of. I did not realise that I could ever agree so strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton): we have the best health service in the world, and we want to continue to improve and develop it. It is not in crisis. It is in change. This is a time of opportunity. We have a proud record, and we want to do more with the professionals and for the patients to develop, build and strengthen our national health service.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 309.

Division No. 38] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs. Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy

Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Rt Hon Sir W. *(Croydn S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Mans, Keith

Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Sir Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the substantial increase under this Government in the number of patients treated by the National Health Service and in the availability of new and better forms of treatment; notes that this has been made possible by massive extra resources provided by the Government, combined with more effective use of those resources; welcomes the further record increase in resources planned for the National Health Service in 1991-92; congratulates those hospitals and other units which have sought and obtained approval to manage their own affairs as self-governing National Health Service trusts; looks forward to the setting up of the new general practitioner fundholding practices; and supports the Government's reforms which will continue to put patients first by further improving the quality, quantity and cost-effectiveness of health services.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

7.14 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the ill-advised privatisation of the electricity supply industry, which is already proving costly to the taxpayer, to electricity consumers and to the balance of trade, which will further set back efforts to protect the environment because of its promotion of energy sales instead of energy saving, and which will increase the country's dependence on fuel imports.

I also commend to the House that it rejects the Government's amendment, which appears to have been drafted by Dr. Pangloss himself, as it clearly suggests that "all is for the best in the best of possible worlds."

It reads rather like the City pages used in their reports about the Secretary of State for Energy in the months leading up to the privatisation of the distribution companies. Unfortunately, his fan club turned rather sour once it discovered what was really happening.

I have some quotes here which do not come from left-wing papers. Today's *Financial Times* states that the "privatisation of the generators is becoming farcical." *The Times* described privatisation as "a recipe for chaos". In the days before the sale of the distribution companies the *Financial Times* stated:

"Even before dealings in the new electricity shares have started, the voice of aggrieved punters is being heard in the land."

That bastion of Tory party rectitude, *The Daily Telegraph*, stated:

"The biggest privatisation of all . . . has fallen at the last hurdle . . . If this is the Government's idea of popular capitalism, then it is the life and pensions salesmen who should be breaking out the champagne."

In case *The Daily Telegraph* has gone over the wall and turned into a collection of lefties, *The Times* in its genteel way described the right hon. Gentleman's view that the number of people buying electricity shares proved the popularity of privatisation as "genteel rot". It continued:

"This has nothing to do with people's capitalism, only with the way they price 'em."

I shall come to that in a few minutes. *The Independent*, which is certainly not of a left-wing persuasion, described the privatisation for most small investors as, not a huge success, but

"a huge waste of time."

I can continue quoting the allegedly more serious newspapers. The *Daily Mail* is a serious newspaper which has seldom been accused of supporting the Labour party. It stated that the situation

"reflects the yawning gulf between starry-eyed official talk about a share-owning democracy, and the grubbier reality in which the system is slanted to favour the fat cats while the small shareholder gets shoved aside."

If I had said that, I should have been denounced as an extremist. Indeed, I said it before the *Daily Mail* which was almost quoting me. It endorsed what I said. As everybody recognises, the *Financial Times* is the most serious newspaper on these matters. It described the companies as being sold on a "dodgy prospectus". That comes from all those people who used to form the principal part of the chorus of the right hon. Gentleman's fan club.

The electricity industry needs to be treated more seriously than it is being treated by the Government. It is of crucial importance to everybody—to people in their homes, to transport, to industry and to commerce. In this country as in every other, it forms the basic sinews of a modern, technological society. I regret to say that it is treated like a plaything by the Government.

The industry's well-trained and dedicated staff are being treated like chattels. They open their newspapers one day to discover that they will be sold to one company, but the next day the papers contain a denial of such a plan. They do not know what they are doing or where they are going. Those people, who have dedicated their lives to securing a supply of electricity to their fellow citizens, are being treated like dirt.

Anyone who has seen the ludicrous Frank N. Stein advertisements or the more recent Star Trek advertisements with a touch of "Hi-de-Hi" will know that the industry has become the plaything of Tory ideologues and Tory advertisers. I say that deliberately because a leading member and supporter of the Tory party and a former parliamentary candidate who stood against my hon. Friend the Labour Chief Whip masterminded and created those wondrous advertisements. It is a Tory racket and anyone studying the advertisements will know that they have been produced and promoted by people who do not take the electricity industry seriously.

No one is looking after the consumer or the interests of the taxpayer and the environment. The Government want a quick sale and the City want a quick buck—they are both after as much as they can get.

Before the Government set about it, the electricity supply industry of England and Wales had net assets of £37,000 million—that is what the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson) told the Tory conference in 1988 when he was Secretary of State for Energy. He also said that it was

"an industry on which all of us rely, and in whose successful future we all have an interest."

It is worth considering the basis on which the right hon. Gentleman arrived at the value of £37 billion—presuming, of course, that people try to tell the truth from the platform at the Tory conference. The distribution companies, plus the grid companies, were worth £16 billion according to the audited accounts signed by City auditors. The Government sold them for about £5 billion. If one adds in the £3 billion debt that those companies must repay to the Government, it means that the Government sold off £16 billion of public assets for half their proper price. We warned about that repeatedly and raised it in debate and during Question Time. I also wrote several letters to the present Secretary of State for Energy to say that he was selling the taxpayer short. He ignored what we said and denied our claims.

Last week I had to listen to the right hon. Gentleman on "Today" on Radio 4—I had to do so because the BBC did not want a countervailing view. He said that

"no one, but no one"

had said before the event that he had underpriced the shares. I understand that I am no one, but I am the no one who warned him. Several other of my hon. Friends also rank among the no persons who warned him.

The Secretary of State said all along that he would not accept the value from the audited accounts. Basically, his response was that the shares would be worth what they fetched on the open market. Judged by the right hon.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

Gentleman's own criteria, on the first day of dealings those shares fetched 60 per cent. more than he asked for them. By his own standards he was wildly wrong.

Never mind about the right hon. Gentleman's criteria. We believe that we are right in believing that he lost £8 billion on that transaction. That taxpayers' money would have repaired all our ill-repaired schools and hospitals—to which reference was made in our previous debate. That money would pay for building 30,000 homes for our homeless. It would still leave enough to knock £100 off every poll tax bill. That is the type of money that the right hon. Gentleman blew by getting it wrong and underpricing the shares.

The right hon. Gentleman has wasted an enormous amount of taxpayers' money—our money. He is now proposing to sell National Power and PowerGen. According to the lies and leaks that have been peddled by his PR advisers, he is proposing to sell them for about £3 billion. Again, the audited accounts show that the assets which he is prepared to sell for £3 billion are worth £13 billion. If he does not like us referring to the audited accounts—as an accountant he obviously knows what value one can put on those accounts—we can use some other comparisons.

PowerGen has 18,000 MW of plant which is to be sold for £1·5 billion. Let us compare that with Sizewell B nuclear power station, which represents 1,200 MW of plant. It, too, will cost £1·5 billion. Obviously there is a new principle in operation: when the taxpayer is selling, £1·5 billion gets 18,000 MW; when the taxpayer is buying, £1·5 billion gets 1,200 MW. There is something wrong there—no one is interested in protecting the taxpayer.

The Secretary of State may say that nuclear power is rather expensive. Normally he says that it is not, but for these purposes he may deploy the opposite argument. I should be the last to deny how expensive nuclear power has been and will prove to be. However, even in my most fervent enmity towards nuclear power I would not claim that a discrepancy in values between 18,000 MW and 1,200 MW was quite correct. The right hon. Gentleman has a lot of talking to do to justify that.

Let us assume that one nuclear power station which no one needs and to which most sensible people are opposed is not a relevant consideration. Let us consider the plans for National Power. It says that, by the end of the century, it intends to acquire 4,000 MW of gas-fired generating plant. Estimates produced by Siemens, which has already been awarded some of the contracts for that plant and is one of Europe's major producers, show that one can obtain 4,000 MW of gas-fired plant for the magic figure of about £1·5 billion. So £1·5 billion gets us 4,000 MW, but the right hon. Gentleman plans to sell 18,000 MW of plant for the same amount. He is underselling again.

We have deliberately described the privatisation as "ill-advised" because the right hon. Gentleman employs more than £50 million worth of advisers who give him such poor advice on valuation. If people believe it is shocking that the right hon. Gentleman is getting 50 million quid worth of duff advice, the electricity industry companies are, between them, getting another £100 million quid worth of duff advice. They are buying it all from the City at the expense of the taxpayer and the electricity consumer.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am listening with interest to the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he can account for why 98 per cent. of employees in the electricity industry applied successfully for shares? In the most unlikely event of a Labour Government ever coming to power again, will the hon. Gentleman assure the House that, should they renationalise the industry, they will continue to pay dividends to those who have invested much of their savings in that great industry?

Mr. Dobson: I might be accused of making almost any remark in respect of electricity privatisation, but the last thing that I would say is that buying shares is a bad bargain—and if one is working in the industry, they are an even better bargain than for others. It is perfectly reasonable for people to buy shares that are being sold not just at a rock bottom price, but at a price that goes through the bottom and comes out the other side. I will explain shortly what a Labour Government will do after the next general election.

The city firms have been giving the Secretary of State lousy advice and bad value for money—and have guaranteed that he gets poor value for money for the taxpayer. The leading companies involved are Kleinwort Benson, James Capel, Herbert Smith, Peat Marwick, Price Waterhouse and Ernst and Young. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends whether they can think of anything that those companies have in common besides having substantial amounts of money bunged at them by the Government for giving duff advice.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): They are all giving money to the Tories.

Mr. Dobson: That may be true, but they also have in common the fact that they were all criticised by Department of Trade and Industry inspectors for falling down on the job in respect of their involvement in other companies. The DTI report on Ramor Investments criticised Price Waterhouse, and that on Orbit Holdings criticised Peat Marwick. Ernst and Young came under criticism in the DTI report on Orbit Holdings.

Perhaps the most famous DTI report of recent times concerned the scandal involving Harrods and the House of Fraser. The company which came in for criticism in that case was Kleinwort Benson—the Government's leading adviser for the electricity privatisation. The report makes it clear that Kleinwort fell down on the job and failed to check the assets of the Fayed brothers, and asserted wrongly that their assets were worth several billion dollars. So Kleinwort certainly were not too good at valuation in that instance. The firm made other statements about the background of the Fayeds that persuaded people to attach credence to statements about them, having failed to undertake the necessary investigations—so that what Kleinwort asserted to be true proved to be false. Not only that, but Kleinwort persuaded its clients to retain public relations advisers to peddle the false information that the Fayeds and Kleinwort were producing.

Herbert Smith, the Government's legal adviser, was also criticised by the DTI in connection with the House of Fraser. The inspectors described both companies as complementing each other's efforts in an unco-ordinated way. They were surprised that

> "Kleinwort and Herbert Smith appeared able to accept as credible the value of at least $1 billion which the Fayeds attributed to their assets."

Whatever Kleinwort and Herbert Smith were good at, clearly they were not too good at valuing and checking assets.

The Government's lead broker, James Capel, features in the DTI's report on Consolidated Gold Fields, which states:

"We consider that Capels hindered the Company's attempts to obtain information about the interest in its shares".

The report describes an important letter sent by Capel as inadequate.

The Government have just announced that Smith New Court has been called in to add a bit of weight and professionalism to the sale of the generating companies because such a mess was made of the distribution companies. Lo and behold, on the page facing the DTI's remarks about Consolidated Gold Fields, there is a comment—I freely confess that I discovered it only by accident—about the very people who have been brought in to add more weight and professionalism to the Secretary of State's activities:

"We consider that Smith New Court seriously hindered the Company's attempt to pursue its right under section 212 with a view to identifying who had been buying a substantial number of its shares."

My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) will shortly tell the House who was buying and selling those shares, and who the hell Smith New Court was working for in the sale of South Wales Electricity shares on the first day of their issue, because that matter still needs to be cleared up.

The DTI inspectors also said of Smith New Court:

"Moreover we consider that Smith New Court did not understand their responsibilities under the Act, and that they did not make any serious attempt to seek proper legal advice."

That is the quality of advisers that the Secretary of State is employing these days. Are they the kind of people who should be on the Government's payroll? One can understand why the Secretary of State got things so wrong. One can understand those firms liking such lucrative contracts, but the taxpayers will want to know whether they are getting anything in return. The Secretary of State for Energy, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were all involved in making the appointments, but I still have not been told whether those advisers were vetted beforehand. If their records were checked, one wonders what those companies have to do to be struck off. If such activities do not qualify them for exclusion from the Government's list, I do not know what would.

That was not the only City racket involved in the sale of the generating companies. The Secretary of State paid out no less than £49 million of taxpayers' money in underwriters' fees. He agreed to underwrite the only risk, which was that the Gulf crisis might smash the market in the middle of the flotation. The Secretary of State paid £49 million to City companies to underwrite assets being sold at half their proper value—and everyone in the City knew that. That leads to the riddle of when is an underwriter not an underwriter. These days, and when the Government are involved, the answer is, when they have to take a risk. If the underwriters have to take a risk, the Government underwrite the underwriters. That is a charmed circle beyond belief, but neither you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, nor I can break into it. We are not ancient, established City firms. We are not part of that charmed circle whose members regularly get money for old rope. Given all the livery companies that exist, such as the Goldsmiths Company and the Cordwainers Company, perhaps there should be a Money-For-Old-Rope Makers company, whose motto could be, "All that is safely gathered in."

It is even more of a closed and charmed circle than some people realise. The lead underwriters had a hand in determining the value of the generating companies' shares. It is a safe bet that they did not advise the Government to make them too pricey. If the advisers acted rationally—and anyone who gets paid £49 million for doing nothing must be fairly rational—they probably advised the Secretary of State to keep the price of the shares pretty low, so that there would be no risk. The advisers kept the price low, and then told the Secretary of State, "You had better protect us against any risk over the Gulf." The Secretary of State removed the risk, kept down the price of the shares, and then bunged the underwriters £49 million.

Since then he has apparently learnt his lesson. His friends have been telling all the City pages, "We have learnt our lesson and we probably will not give them any underwriting fees for the generating companies". It is a bit late because in some of the City pages they are saying that the Secretary of State need not have given them such fees for the distributing companies; and by God he need not have done because their shares shot up by 60 per cent. in the first hour of trading.

I shall leave the squalor of all that money and return to the subject of what the Government said that they were about. The industry was sold using the slogan of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere—"Power to the people." That is not usually a prominent slogan at Conservative party conferences—at least not the British Conservative party. However, what the right hon. Gentleman did not mention, even at the Conservative party conference, was that a considerable number—15 per cent.—of the people in question would be in Wall street and Tokyo, because that is where 15 per cent. of the distribution companies' shares have gone. We are told that the Secretary of State is so scared that he will not be able to sell the generating companies that he is contemplating an even bigger proportion being sold abroad.

To be fair to the right hon. Member for Hertsmere, when he set out on the grand project of selling the electricity industry it may not have been his intention to sell it to foreigners. Little else that he said he intended to do at the outset has come about. Since he came up with the original structure, the Government have withdrawn the Magnox reactors from the sale. A little later the present Secretary of State withdrew the advanced gas-cooled reactors from the sale, which forced the Government to set up two nuclear electric companies, one in England and Wales and one in Scotland, to keep the nuclear part of the industry in public ownership.

Perhaps I should explain to some of my colleagues that the right hon. Member for Hertsmere had obviously thought of some of the problems connected with nuclear power because, when addressing a meeting of the Adam Smith Institute—one has to be a bit anti-Government ownership to address the Adam Smith Institute—he said:

"It is not in the gift of this or any Government to attempt to legislate the proportion of nuclear well into the next century."

He did not do too badly because he set up an arrangement whereby, by law, when any nuclear power station is running, its output will be used, even though stations capable of producing electricity at half the cost will stand

[Mr. Dobson]

idle. He introduced a nuclear levy to pay for that. Like the state in Marxist theory, the nuclear levy was supposed to wither away and, like the state in Marxist practice, the levy has increased. Contrary to all the promises, the nuclear levy is increasing this year and has not been reduced—as the Secretary of State will confirm, it has gone up again.

So the deepest wishes of the right hon. Member for Hertsmere were not fulfilled. When he spoke to the Adam Smith Institute he promised an end to Government interference in the electricity industry. Grecian 2000's answer to Citizen Smith, "Power to the people" Hertsmere said:

> "We are devolving to Lord Marshall, to Bob Malpas . . . accountability for the industry. And we are devolving to them the power to run their businesses without . . . interference."

I do not know whether you have ever been interfered with by the right hon. Member for Hertsmere, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but if as a result of his interference one ceases to be the chairman of a major industry, or if one ceases to be the chairman as a result of the acquiescence of his successor, as was the case with Bob Malpas, I think one would interpret it as interference. When they lose their jobs, most people regard it as interference of the worst type. Lord Marshall and Bob Malpas have gone.

As a result of all this ideological lunacy from the Government the electricity industry is in a mess. I do not usually claim many things for myself, but earlier this summer, as a result of leaks to me, we discovered that the Secretary of State was proposing to sell PowerGen by private treaty to Hanson Trust. I believe that I came to this Dispatch Box to give the reason why the Secretary of State had to abandon that. I and several of my colleagues pointed out that if Hanson Trust bought PowerGen it would cost the taxpayer in excess of £700 million in tax savings for Hanson Trust. The right hon. Gentleman dismissed our arguments. However, when the proposed sale to Hanson Trust was eventually abandoned, at least one of the Government leakers—perhaps it was not in the Department of Energy but one of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer's leakers—made it clear that the sale had been abandoned because the Chancellor, who is now the Prime Minister, had said, "We are not going to let you do it. If you sell the industry for that small amount we want it to be clear profit and we will not see the profit wiped out like that."

There is another aspect of that matter. Smith New Court were involved in that attempted sale to Hanson because Richardson of Smith New Court was acting as the go-between. Will the Secretary of State tell us whether it is because he wants Richardson to act as a go-between in some trade sales for parts of the generating companies that he has been invited back?

People in the industry and running it do not know whether they are coming or going. Today it is not clear whether the Secretary of State will sell all of National Power and PowerGen. The latest information from the Secretary of State on television and radio last week was that he was going to sell 60 per cent. and retain 40 per cent. of the shares for two years, until after the next general election. However, within one day the City pages were beset by people ringing up to say that they might sell some, or all, of the 40 per cent. and might not wait for two years to do so.

Tonight, the Secretary of State has the opportunity to tell us whether he is sticking by what he said last week or whether there will be a further revision of the many revisions that have taken place. Will the Secretary of State lurch into yet another expedient in his efforts to get rid of this industry? Also he owes it to the people of Scotland, and those who work for the Scottish companies, to tell us what is intended for them. Are they to be disposed of with a 100 per cent. sale, or will some of their assets be retained until after the next general election?

The Government amendment refers to successful restructuring of the industry and its virtual passage into private ownership. As the nuclear part of the industry has not been sold, and if he does not sell 40 per cent. of the generating companies, when the next Labour Government bring the company back into public ownership, 52 per cent. of the assets of the industry will be back in public ownership. After all the farcical nonsense to which the people in the industry have been subjected, the right hon. Gentleman and his predecessor will have managed to get rid of 48 per cent. of the industry's assets to their friends in the private sector.

I now come to the issue mentioned by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory). On being told that the Government might retain 40 per cent.——

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): The hon. Gentleman said that the Labour Government would bring the grid company back into national ownership. Can we deduce from that that the Labour Government will not be bringing the generating and distribution companies back into national ownership?

Mr. Dobson: We have made it as clear as it is possible to make it—by writing it down, by printing it, by holding press conferences, by issuing documents about it, by talking on television and radio about it, and by talking about it here—that all along our strategic intention has been to bring the grid company back into public ownership. I know that this House is a sort of secret society, but it is going too far when an hon. Member who was present the last time we discussed this appears to have forgotten what our policy is.

We believe it crucial to do that for the sake of everyone in the country and for its industrial future, and we shall do it. It will remain our primary objective. What we shall do about the rest of the industry—about the 40 per cent. shares, if there are 40 per cent. shares—we shall determine when we are in government and when we know what the position is. Our basic objective all along has been the grid company back in public ownership. We shall restore the obligation of the electricity industry to supply people with electricity, and we shall place that obligation on the grid company. We shall shift the emphasis from energy sales to energy saving, and place that obligation on all parts of the industry. Likewise, we shall place all the following obligations on all parts of the industry: we shall protect the environment; we shall husband our indigenous fuel resources; we shall seek to protect the balance of trade; and we shall seek to reduce our country's growing dependence on imported fuels.

We believe that these are sound policies and we shall impose all those obligations on the industry—and bring the grid company back into public ownership to further our policies. How the industry will be organised and whether we shall sell the part that the Government have

not sold will be decided when we come to office. In short, we shall ensure that this industry pursues the interests of the consumers and ceases to be the ridiculous plaything of a lot of yuppies, rogues and grafters in the City.

7.51 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof,

"congratulates the Government on the restructuring of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales, the highly successful flotation of the regional electricity companies and its plans for floating National Power and PowerGen; and welcomes the many benefits this privatisation will bring to consumers, employees and the taxpayer."

I find it somewhat surprising that the Opposition should choose to hold this debate at this time. The persistently colourful if consistently unfounded rhetoric about write-offs, sell-offs and rip-offs that we heard today from the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has become an increasingly familiar refrain in recent months—and this occasion, I suppose, would not be complete without the sound of him barking up all the wrong trees again.

So let me return the attention of the House to what this privatisation is all about. From the outset, the aim of the sale has been to introduce competition to the industry, to maximise benefits for customers and for the taxpayer and to give the industry's employees a stake in their own businesses. All these objectives have now been demonstrably achieved.

First, we have a market in electricity in England and Wales where none existed before. That represents a fundamental change. The generators bidding to put power on the grid now have to look not only at their own costs but at the prices charged by their competitors. That should increasingly benefit all customers in the long run, and from the earliest stages of the vesting of the new industry structure there was already plenty of evidence of strong competition in supply to industrial customers with more than one megawatt of demand.

Secondly, the legislation, as we promised, has given significant new rights and protections to customers. The Electricity Act 1989 provides for an enhanced right of supply for customers and for the standards of service to be set and monitored. It also creates the office of the Director General of Electricity Supply as a powerful guardian of the customers' interests.

It is worth pointing out too that the non-fossil fuel obligation has also had the effect of giving an unprecedented boost to a large number of new and renewable generating projects in this country. Under the Renewables Order 1990 the 12 regional electricity companies have contracted with 75 projects with installed capacity of 170 MW. More than two-thirds of this capacity is entirely new and it will nearly double the amount of renewable capacity in England and Wales.

Thirdly, the first stage of the privatisation, the sale of the RECs, has now been accomplished and has proved a major success for the taxpayer. We believe that it has been the most successful privatisation yet—the latest success in more than a decade of privatisation successes under this Government.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Would it not be appropriate for the Secretary of State to explain in some detail what criteria he used to determine success? Was it the mark-up that occurred immediately after flotation and hence the under-pricing? Was it the take-up; or was it the degree of risk taken by the City? On all counts the policy has failed.

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, I shall do my best to explain, later in my speech, why I believe privatisation has been a great success. The Opposition long claimed that it could not be done and that the sale would have to be abandoned—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The predecessor of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras specifically said that the sale would have to be abandoned. I would never accuse the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras of dealing seriously with the privatisation of the industry, and I dismiss his remarks, but his predecessor made it abundantly clear that he thought that the sale would have to be abandoned.

Mr. Dobson: Did not my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) say that the Government would not be able to privatise the nuclear part of the electricity industry, and was he not proved absolutely right?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did say something like that, but his predecessor made it absolutely clear that the privatisation would have to be abandoned.

In the event, the Opposition could not have been proved more wrong. The overwhelming response to the offer showed that a huge number of people remain ready to back the Government's privatisation programme. Some City experts predicted that we would be unable to raise more than £4 billion from the offer. In the event, we are raising more than £5 billion from the sale of the shares and we shall raise almost £3 billion of further proceeds from the injection of debt, arriving at a total return to the tax payer of nearly £8 billion——

Ms. Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): What about the original price of £30 billion quoted by the Government?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall come to that.

In the process we have also attracted more investors than ever before. More than 5 million applicants made over 12 million applications, and the regional electricity companies tell me that the majority of the investors have stayed on their registers. Contrary to the Opposition's argument, that is not because shareholders do not believe that their allocation is worth selling. One quarter of all applications were for only 100 shares, and 10 million of the 12·75 million applications were for 500 shares or less. So, with the shares having been allocated to about three quarters of all who applied and with virtually all REC customers receiving an allocation, we believe that we have satisfied the majority of applicants.

There has been a massive response from the industry's own employees. Almost 98 per cent. of eligible employees took part in the regional electricity companies' offers. In total, nearly 84,000 employees and almost 21,000 pensioners applied for and received shares under the various employee and pensioner offers for the 12 regional electricity companies. Between them, they were allocated some 160 million shares. Collectively, they now own over 7 per cent. of their own companies.

In all these important respects the privatisation has been totally vindicated but, characteristically, none of this has prevented the Opposition from trying to have it both ways. First, they said that it could not be done. Now they

[Mr. Wakeham]

claim, with an Alice-in-Wonderland logic, that a public offer which was 10 times oversubscribed was a failure. That, presumably, can be only on the basis of comparing the proceeds of the sale with the replacement cost of the companies' assets. But that is an utterly meaningless exercise. Companies are sold on their expected earnings and dividends, not on the theoretical replacement cost of assets. If the assets had been sold at that price, the hon. Gentleman would have had to ask himself what price electricity would have to reach if a reasonable return were to be made on those very inflated figures.

Mr. Dobson: Does not the Secretary of State accept that if the Government were trying to protect the consumer and taxpayer there was a fundamental contradiction in their plans? He says that if the industry had been sold at its proper value, private shareholders would have held the consumers to ransom.

Mr. Wakeham: No, the hon. Gentleman has misunderstood me. The hon. Gentleman would have wished the industry to be sold at the ridiculous valuation that he put upon it. That would have been the current cost accounting valuation. That is not a value that the business would fetch in the market place. In that case, his proposition as to what to charge for electricity would have been irreconcilable. Using our basis, we were able to strike a reasonable balance between the price of electricity and a return for shareholders. The price of the business was commensurate with the profits and dividends that they were earning.

In all the hon. Gentleman's extravagant speeches he has said that he believes that the businesses should be valued on the current cost accounting basis, but very few people agree with him. According to the hon. Gentleman's terminology, the issue was a give-away, due to the subsequent rise in price, with a stock market under the shadow of war. The hon. Gentleman's remarks have not improved his employment prospects. If, however, his foresight matches his hindsight, he should have a great future ahead of him in the City, though I would advise prospective employers against rushing to him at once.

Mr. Dobson: Occasionally, like other people, I indulge in flights of fancy. However, on every occasion that we have questioned the valuation of this industry's assets, we have quoted from the audited accounts of the companies, signed by allegedly reputable City auditors. If the right hon. Gentleman believes that current cost accounting valuations are irrelevant at this point, why was it that when the assets of the national grid were calculated for the purpose of dividing them between the distribution companies the current cost net assets were divided up? When that division was made, was not each distribution company's share decided on the basis of each distribution company's current net assets, using the current cost accounting convention? If the money was divided up and allocated between the distribution companies on that basis, why is it irrelevant for this sale?

Mr. Wakeham: It is perfectly reasonable to use the current cost accounting valuation method in order to compare like with like. A current cost accounting valuation is a perfectly proper accountancy basis, but that is not the basis upon which businesses can be sold. They are sold on the basis of a return on investment. If one seeks to obtain current cost accounting valuations of an investment, one is bound to end up with the industry remaining in the hands of the state. The hon. Gentleman obviously wants the industry to remain in the hands of the state. I understand, therefore, why he wants the current cost accounting valuation formula to be employed. On that basis it is impossible to privatise the industry.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the value of the assets in current cost accounting terms, and what he said was correct, but the point to be made about the premium is simple. The value of the stock market moved significantly between the day we settled the price and the price at which dealing started. The nearest comparison with electricity shares must be the water company shares. We find that 34p of the premium was due entirely to the movement in the stock market at that time. The market moved during a period of nearly three weeks. When this transaction took place there was a degree of uncertainty about the war in the Gulf and the market moved. The decision that we made at the time was right. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras ceased to laugh for a minute and listened to what I am saying, he would learn something. If he does not intend to do so, I might just as well continue with my speech. At the time that we made the decision, every City commentator said that we had priced the issue on an extremely tight basis. Many said that the yield should be around 9 per cent. It was 8·4 per cent. It is easy to be wise after the event, but we priced it on what was a proper and fair basis at that time. Then the market moved. That accounted for the premium.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras referred to the Government's decision to sell only 60 per cent. of the shares in National Power and PowerGen as a mess-up. I suppose that that somewhat milder term than the ones he has used on previous occasions must be welcomed. However, that does not make his assertion any the less wrong. The generators have markedly different characteristics and a different position in the market from the 12 regional electricity companies. In those circumstances, we are selling only 60 per cent. now, for precisely the reason that the hon. Gentleman was arguing for—to maximise the return to the taxpayer. Surely he should welcome that—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is too quick to comment and too slow to listen. The point of my remark was to show the radically different nature of the generating companies from the regional electricity companies. What we did for the regional electricity companies was right for them and what we are doing for the generators is right for them. We are correct in both judgments.—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras are wrong on both instances and are at least consistent. Except for the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, everybody learns something, but that does not make what we have done wrong. They are different cases and have to be dealt with differently. We believe that we are acting in the best way to maximise the return.

Let me make clear our position on retaining the remaining 40 per cent. of National Power and PowerGen. For those who, unlike the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, did not hear me on the radio the other morning I shall repeat our views. First, the Government will commit themselves to retain those shares until 31 March 1993—three years from vesting date. That will give the senior managers of the company, many of whom

worked with distinction for the CEGB, a substantial period of time in which to bring about any necessary changes. Until that date I shall neither float the shares nor be prepared to entertain offers from trade buyers.

Secondly, I should make it clear that I am not committing the Government to dispose of their holdings on or immediately after 1 April 1993. They may sell the shares in 1993, 1994, 1995 or at a later date. That will properly depend upon market conditions and opportunities. The Government will consult the directors of the company before making any decision on a sale.

Thirdly, all other things being equal, the Government would prefer to sell the shares in a way that contributes to wider share ownership. However, I have a duty to the taxpayer to maximise the proceeds from the sale of these important national assets. To that end I must have the option of selling the shares to one or more trade buyers. It is not possible to say what will happen in two years' time or later and I therefore propose to make it clear in the prospectus that some time after two years I have the option of selling the shares in either company through a flotation, a trade sale to one or more companies or through a private placement. The Labour party also threatened that if it were to win power at the next election, it would use the Government's 40 per cent. retained stake in the industry as a means of renationalising the national grid.

Mr. Dobson: We have not said that. All we said is that we would use the powers available to a major minority shareholder with 40 per cent. All the other things will have to be considered once we get into office.

Mr. Wakeham: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman suffers from leaks as well, but I am happy to accept what he says. Of course, the renationalising of the national grid is clear. That is a matter for the Labour party, but I scarcely think that further threats of renationalisation are likely to appeal to the shareholders in the industry or to boost Labour's electoral prospects.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The Minister emphasised the point that workers in the industry would own 7 per cent. of the distribution companies. Does he anticipate that any different position will apply for the generating companies and does he accept that it would be wrong and anomalous for a different arrangement to apply within different parts of the electricity supply industry? Will he assure the House that he recognises that, although employees in the industry may own 7 per cent. of the equity of the distribution companies, that is probably only a third and certainly less than half the shareholding of people who are not resident in this country and that many in the industry and outside it find that deplorable?

Mr. Wakeham: We want to encourage employees in the generating companies to take up their entitlement of employee shares. It is not absolutely possible for the arrangements for employees in the generating business to be on exactly the same basis because, for example, we have some obligations to the employees of Nuclear Electric who were at one time to be employees of National Power. As far as I know—I shall check the details—the terms are the same or comparable, but if I am wrong I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

On the question of privatisation generally, Opposition Members face an awkward political dilemma. Privatisation was pioneered in this country and has now been taken up by countries all over the world. It is manifestly popular and successful. However, it has not prevented the reluctant converts to the market economy sitting on the Opposition Benches from voting against every privatisation measure that we have brought before the House. The Opposition voted against the privatisation of British Telecom, British Gas, British Airways, the British Airports Authority, water and now electricity. At least that has the virtue of consistency, which seems to have been a theme of this debate, but it does not reflect——

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I get the feeling that the right hon. Gentleman is reaching the end of his remarks. I hope that he will comment on the direct question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) about what will happen to the electricity industry in Scotland.

Mr. Wakeham: I do not have direct responsibility for the industry in Scotland. In all privatisations it is not the practice to announce the percentage of shares to be sold until a relatively short time before the privatisation. Therefore, I would not have expected my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to have yet stated his position on that. The reasons I have used as the basis for my decision to sell only 60 per cent. of the generating companies are not the same as those applying in Scotland because Scottish companies are integrated and are not generating companies operating in the same way in a new market. That was at the heart of the reason why I thought it right for the taxpayer to retain 40 per cent. of the shares. I cannot give a direct answer, but I can say that, as far as I know, no decision has yet been made—I would not have expected one—and the arguments used for the decision in England and Wales are not the same as those applying in Scotland.

I was referring to the Labour party's dilemma—their opposition to privatisation in practice and their acceptance of market forces to a greater extent than in the past.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Was it not the case that market forces were seriously interfered with at the time of the share flotation because there was an electricity supply crisis caused by the severe weather conditions that especially hit the east midlands? The Minister did not make a statement about that severe crisis, no offer of Government help was made and there was no declaration of an emergency because it would have seriously affected the market and the sale of East Midlands electricity shares. Some hon. Members from the east midlands have not been able to have the meeting with the Minister that he promised in order to discuss these matters.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman can have a meeting with me if he wants, but he should recall that there was a debate in the House which he could not attend——

Mr. Barnes: I did; it was my debate.

Mr. Wakeham: Let me finish. There was a debate, and it was perfectly appropriate for my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to give a full account of the position.

In the western world, and increasingly in the communist world, the argument about whether market

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mechanisms represent the most efficient way of allocating resources and meeting human needs appears to have been decisively won. I thought that we had all become believers in the market economy, but Opposition Members still hesitate about the creation of a market in electricity and a sale which produces a clear and welcome separation between the objects of regulation and those of ownership.

I invite the House to reject the Opposition's motion. They have demonstrated confusion, both in principle and practice. By contrast, we have taken a state monopoly and set it on the path to full competition. We have ensured a better deal for consumers, we have achieved an excellent return for the taxpayer, and we have given more than 80,000 employees a stake in the future of their industry. I commend the amendment to the House.

8.21 pm

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): We heard much from the Secretary of State about the successful sale of the distribution companies in England and Wales. I think that he said that the sale had been totally vindicated, that it had been a major success and that it was the latest and biggest in the line of privatisation successes for the Government.

There was never any danger of the sale not being successfully concluded by the Government. If the price is pitched low enough, buyers will always be prepared to make a quick profit, which is exactly what happened with the sale of the distribution companies. The substantial premiums enjoyed in post-privatisation trading proved that the sale was nothing less than a wanton giveaway at the taxpayers' expense, by a Government who are now so profligate with public assets that they do not realise when they have been ripped off by their own supporters. We should be grateful that; unlike British Aerospace, the Government did not pay someone to take the distribution companies off their hands.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) raised the issue of whether the Scottish companies will be given the same treatment that National Power and PowerGen received in the past week. I know that the Secretary of State said that he was not directly responsible, but a Scottish Office Minister is on the Front Bench who should be able to pass information to the Minister who will reply to the debate.

I have three specific questions to which not only I but the people of Scotland have a right to hear an answer. First, will less than 100 per cent. of the equity in the two Scottish power companies be sold in the first instance? Secondly, will shares be offered in a linked package that can be split only when dealings commence? Will Scottish Hydro-Electric and Scottish Power be sold together in one flotation? Critically, will the Government consider a minority trade buyer for the remaining blocks at any point after 1993?

The answers to those questions are vital, not only for the Scottish electric supply industry but the whole Scottish economy, which is so tightly integrated that, if the Government intervene or interfere with power generation, they interfere with the prospects for the Scottish coal industry, they call into question the viability of Scotland's railway network and they affect the prospects of the Scottish power engineering industry. The whole Scottish economy can be affected by the outcome of those decisions.

I can well understand why the Government are anxious about the flotation prospects of the power companies. Their huge debt burdens and capital investment requirements could make prospective buyers nervous about the prospect of investing in them. I understand why the Government are offering only 60 per cent. of the equity in the first instance: they fear an almighty flop if they do otherwise and that the market will not respond to a 100 per cent. flotation.

I understand, too, why the Government are considering allowing a trade buyer to take up the remaining blocks in two or three years' time: they know not only that any such trade buyer would thereby acquire a block of shares that would serve as a tremendous platform for the takeover of the company, but that stock exchange rules would require anyone with that number of shares to make a bid for the whole company.

The Government well understand that such a scenario will foster hopes among potential small investors of windfall takeover profits in two or three years' time, when they can sell their shares to the person who bids for the entire company. By holding out such a scenario, the Government hope to make a success of the sale of the power companies.

If the answers to my questions are, yes, less than 100 per cent. equity will be put on sale in the summer, yes, the companies will be sold in a linked package and, yes, trade buyers will be offered the remaining blocks in the future, a series of other questions arise. First, what are we to make of the Minister's claim that there will be the maximum benefit to customers if the electricity companies fall under the monopoly control of a single person or company? He said, for example, that he expects enhanced rights of supply and improved standards of performance to benefit customers.

Earlier tonight, I spoke to my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), who drew to my attention what is happening under Scottish Power in the run-up to privatisation, never mind what might happen in its aftermath. He told me that one of his constituents, a 74-year-old pensioner who struggles to get by on an income of only £48·50 a week, had a budget account with Scottish Power, which it mismanaged to the extent that she suddenly found that she had arrears of £190. It contacted her and said that it expected her to repay the arrears at about £14·10 a week from an income of £48·50.

My hon. Friend intervened and asked Scottish Power to send an engineer to check the electricity supply to ensure that the figures were correct. Once the engineer had called and checked, the pensioner received a bill of £20 for his visit. Is that what the Minister means by enhanced rights of supply and improved standard of performance for customers in the aftermath of privatisation? The reality for customers is that standards and performance will be much worse and more costly than under the public sector.

How will the decisions that are being taken about the privatisation of the Scottish power companies affect current negotiations between the Scottish Office and Scottish power companies about the debt burden which the privatised companies will inherit? If, as is entirely possible under the Government's current strategy, Scottish Power and Scottish Hydro-Electric end up in the control of someone such as Lord Hanson, the question arises, why

should the taxpayer write off accumulated debts incurred by the Scottish power companies when the main beneficiary will be the majority shareholders in the companies? Surely, if the likes of Lord Hanson want the power, they should accept the responsibility of the debt that goes with it. We are talking about big sums, because Scottish Power's most recent balance sheet shows about £509 million in long-term borrowing. Taxpayers and voters will want to know why they are expected to pay for someone else's profits in that way.

Another important question is, who will make the important decisions about the future capital investment programmes with which these power companies are faced? The European Commission's large combustion plants directive will have to be applied by the Government. That means that flue gas desulphurisation equipment will have to be retrofitted to the coal-fired power stations at Longannet and Cockenzie. We know that retrofitting at Drax in Yorkshire is costing £650 million, so whoever takes control of the Scottish power companies will have to make an early decision on the immense and urgent capital projects facing the Scottish electricity industry.

That is not the only investment decision in the pipeline; there are also plans to upgrade the Scottish interconnector with the south. Almost the only argument that the Government put forward to justify the sale of the Scottish power companies was that it would facilitate the sale of surplus Scottish electricity to the English market. However, the investment required—about £100 million—to upgrade the interconnector would have to compete with the investment that is required to retrofit FGD equipment at Longannet and Cockenzie.

Which of these investment projects will come first? Which will have the higher priority accorded to it? Who will make the decisions? Even if the decisions are both positive, and retrofitting and upgrading of the interconnector go ahead, what will be the impact of those investment decisions on the competitive pricing of Scottish electricity? It certainly will not make it any cheaper in the short or the long run.

Two years ago, the former Secretary of State for Scotland said:

> "England is short of electricity and for a few years it will have to purchase it either from the Scottish industry or through the French industry or through building extra capacity."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman pointed out:

> "the 5,000 megawatts of spare Scottish capacity might prove the cheapest option for the English power industry"

in the long run. But it might not prove the cheapest option if major capital investments must be made by the Scottish power industry and if, as a result, the price of Scottish coal goes up. Remember, it is a privatised English industry, which will look not to the interests of Scotland, or indeed of England and Wales, but solely to the interests of its shareholders who will make those decisions. The sanguine view held by the former Secretary of State for the prospects for the future of the Scottish industry can be called into question.

In the years ahead, much cheaper coal will be available to the English power companies. It is now being brought in from all around the world. Associated British Ports is planning a big coal importing facility close to Immingham, which will be able to accommodate the largest ships for carrying coal—Cape size ships. They enable the United Kingdom to benefit from direct shipments from South Africa, Colombia, the United States and Australia. Scottish coal will have to compete with all that cheap coal. This is a serious matter.

Certainly, the interests of the electricity users and the interests of the Scottish people and the Scottish economy will not even arise in the calculations of a privately owned electricity industry. Those who doubt that should look to the example that has been set by a privatised British Steel, as it slowly strangles the Scottish steel industry and in the process shows nothing but contempt for a Scottish Office that is powerless to do anything about British Steel. The irony is that, having created one Frankenstein's monster which they cannot control, the Government are creating a new family of Frankenstein's monsters which they will not be able to control. It is difficult to overestimate the folly of the Government's drive towards privatising the electricity industry.

Vital national issues are at stake in this industry. We could be on the eve of a Gulf war which will send the price of oil spiralling. Many experts predict that gas prices will double over the next 10 years. The future of the nuclear industry is grim, to say the least. More than ever, we need a Government in charge of energy policy and directing it towards an integrated energy policy; yet the Government are selling off our electricity industry and leaving the key decisions on investment and strategy to private sector companies rather than taking responsibility themselves. It is sheer madness.

Workers in the power engineering industry, such as those at Babcock in Renfrewshire, have technology and expertise which is unrivalled anywhere in the world, but they must face the fact that key decisions about their home market will be made not by the Government but by the private sector interests which will take over control of the electricity industry.

Coal, a vital national resource, depends upon key investment decisions which will be taken by the electricity supply industry. That, too, has been surrendered by the Government to those who have no concern for national interests, national security or anything else. Indeed, there is even talk of winding up the Department of Energy and doing away with the role of the Secretary of State for Energy—which, given the present incumbent, some people may think is not a bad idea. The answer is not to do away with the Department of Energy or the role of the Secretary of State but to change them, and the people of Britain will do that at the next general election.

8.35 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): As ever, the House was entertained by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I certainly was, but I should have regarded his speech as slightly more credible if he had gone wider than the issue of flotation, which he made the centre of his speech. Flotation is obviously an important issue, but the hon. Gentleman's comments might have been more credible if, on the general issue of flotation, the Labour party did not always try to have it both ways. I refer the hon. Gentleman and other Labour Members to their comments on the recent flotation of BP shares, when the Government were equally heavily criticised for having set the price too high. The hon. Gentleman described the flotation as a failure. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State exposed the hon. Gentleman's failure to appreciate how assets are valued

[Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith]

and particularly how markets can change between the fixing of a price and flotation. The hon. Gentleman's speech was also incredible because it did not deal with the wider issue. He chose to ignore the many benefits that electricity privatisation has brought, on which I should like to dwell.

A surprising benefit of electricity privatisation, but perhaps one of the most significant, has been the number of direct contracts that are springing up between North sea producers of gas and onshore generators of electricity. In taking together privatisation of the gas industry and privatisation of the electricity industry, we have clear evidence before our eyes of the way in which the market has opened up and the fact that new competition exists. This can be seen in the proposals to pipe gas from the North sea into the east end of London and generate it into electricity, where the main consumption takes place. This opening up of the market was brought about only by the privatisation of those two industries. No one can deny that it opened up competition in a major way.

Mr. Dobson: In referring to proposals for a gas-fired power station in the east end of London, is the right hon. Gentleman referring to Thames Power's proposals? Does he agree that it might have been wise to point out to the House that that company intends to import gas from abroad, not to use British gas?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No; I was referring to the proposals by Conoco, which is involved in a consortium. That is direct evidence. There is a great deal of other evidence of contracts under discussion involving projects along the east coast of England where gas may be piped ashore to generate electricity.

That underlines two other points. The first, which again stems from Government legislation, is the importance, on the gas side, of the role of the regulator, which is making possible the common use of the British Gas pipeline. The positive role of the regulator, James Mackinnon, is another example of the way in which Government policies are leading to success. Secondly, we have witnessed not only the opening-up of competition but the more efficient use of energy—something that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras passed over very quickly in his opening speech. The generation of electricity from gas is leading to much efficient conversion, through combined cycle generation, and I hope that a number of proposals on combined heat and power will also shortly come into effect. That is another example that the privatisation of the gas and electricity industries together is leading not only to more competition but to a much more efficient use of energy than we have had in the past—certainly much more efficient than was apparent under the nationalised industries.

There is also a major widening of competition in the contracts between generators and industrial users. The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) referred specifically to what is happening in the Scottish industry, so let me take an example from the Scottish industry. What was one of the first contracts between a generating company and a major industrial user? To many people's surprise, one of the smaller generating companies, Scottish Hydro Electric, obtained a contract with British Oxygen for that company's activities throughout the United Kingdom. If direct contracts between generators and major industrial users do not open up competition, I do not know what does. Moreover, the privatised structure has allowed not only more competition but more enterprise on the part of a relatively small company in obtaining a United Kingdom-wide contract, giving it the opportunity to develop a far larger market and to enjoy new-found vitality.

I hope that, when Scottish Hydro Electric is floated, it will be on the basis of a complete sale. Through its enterprise, the company has shown itself to be highly attractive to investors—particularly small investors. I speak as a consumer of the power generated by Scottish Hydro Electric. Like many others, I shall be delighted to invest in the company that generates the electricity that I use, which, in the short period since privatisation, has shown itself to be a company that is prepared to go out and win markets throughout the rest of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, when a contract runs out, a large industrial company may be able to shop around for alternative sources of supply, but that the ordinary domestic consumer will not only be unable to shop around but will have to make up for the earnings that the district regional company will lose when such a large industrial concern changes its source of electricity?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman used the critical words "shop around". When the contract ends, industrial users of electricity can shop around. That will impose on the generating companies the disciplines of the market which will make them more efficient. Given the role of the regulator, there will also be a far greater certainty of the domestic consumer benefiting from the rigours of the market.

I have one further point to make about Scottish Hydro Electric. Despite pressures from those of us who represent constituencies in the north of Scotland, who pointed out that it was somewhat anomalous that the company—albeit for historical reasons—should have its headquarters in Edinburgh, outwith its area of operation, nothing was done. It is significant that in the past few days—after the privatisation of the company—it has miraculously chosen to move its headquarters to Perth, in the area in which it operates. We pressed such a move on the Government and on Ministers for many years, but only when the company was privatised did it choose of its own volition to respond to the consumers in its area and move its headquarters. I welcome that decision and commend the management on it.

I find it difficult to understand some of what Opposition Members have said about nuclear power. One of the things that the privatisation process has done is to expose the nuclear industry to the high costs involved. That did not happen when the whole industry, including the nuclear industry, was nationalised. There was a change in the Government's policy on privatisation, which I welcomed, but that end was nevertheless achieved as a result of the privatisation process. As a result, the nuclear industry, which—in my judgment, correctly—has been kept in the public sector, has been given a new market discipline. I should have thought that Opposition Members would welcome that.

I hope that the industry will respond; I believe that it will. In terms of production costs, Scottish Nuclear Fuels

has a very good record relative to nuclear companies elsewhere in Britain and in the world. I hope that the Government will continue to support the nuclear industry. It is important that we should maintain a proportion of our electricity supplies from that source to ensure variety of supply, security of supply—which will obviously be necessary from time to time—and the development of new technologies.

I believe that, so far from proving the case that privatisation has not worked, by ignoring the wider issues —the real benefit of competition, for example—the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has condemned his own case. I hope that the House, too, will condemn it tonight.

8.46 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) made a good fist of justifying a policy whose limited benefits and interesting consequences were certainly not forecast or foreseen by the Government when they embarked on the privatisation of the electricity industry. The privatisation strategy has changed almost daily under different Ministers and in different circumstances. The right hon. Gentleman is entitled to point out the consequences, but he is not entitled to claim credit on behalf of the Government and praise the far-sightedness of Ministers who launched the projects.

Part of the problem with the whole exercise is that it has been undertaken fundamentally for ideological purposes, with no real thought about how to serve the interests of the industry or the consumer. That is why it is flawed. The Liberal Democrats made it clear that we accepted the need for changes in the structure of the industry. Throughout the proceedings on the Electricity Bill, we tabled amendments in an attempt to achieve such changes. We were proved right in a number of cases—not the least of which concerned the withdrawal of nuclear power from the flotation. When we first suggested that, we were ridiculed by the then Secretary of State. He said that our suggestion was absurd and that nuclear power was a wonderfully profitable operation which would command support once its profitability had been clearly demonstrated to the market. When it did not command that support, the Secretary of State claimed that it was terribly clever of him to have identified the fact that nuclear power was such a loss-maker and to have withdrawn it from the flotation. That argument was touched on by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside.

It is fair to say that the Government's electricity privatisation plans were not only ideologically motivated, but were ill thought-out and shambolic. Privatisation has also been a cheapskate exercise in terms of what has been achieved on behalf of both taxpayers and those who have sought to purchase shares, many of whom failed to be allocated any shares at all.

The Secretary of State said tonight that he thought that the total yield from the sale of the electricity industry would be about £8 billion. That is a far cry from the £20 billion that the Government originally thought would be the likely yield from the industry. That suggests that the price was pitched very low indeed.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will tell me whether my calculations are correct. The money resolution to the Electricity Bill amounted to more than £6 billion for contingencies, debt write-offs and related costs of the flotation and that is before we consider advertising, underwriting and other consequential costs. On that basis, it appears that the net return to the Government from the sale of the entire industry is under £2 billion. That is a very poor return for an industry of such crucial importance. Regardless of the debate on whether we are talking about current cost accounting or replacement cost accounting, that figure is a tiny fraction of the worth of the industry to the United Kingdom economy by any measure that we care to use—current, capital or any other kind of accounting.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) referred to the rather anomalous situation in Scotland which has developed in an extraordinary way. Originally, the Scottish companies thought that they were going to be substantially disadvantaged by being placed at the end of the queue. However, ironically, the chaos and confusion that has reigned in England and Wales compared with the relative consistency of approach in Scotland has given the Scottish companies an opportunity which, as the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside pointed out, they have not been slow to exploit.

If you, Mr. Speaker, were to drive to Aberdeen airport, as I frequently do, going north out of Aberdeen you would pass a very large poster just short of the turning for the airport. That poster is an advert for Hydro Electric and it states:

"We charge over the border at every opportunity."

That is a sign of that company's success in selling our electricity to English consumers and good luck to the management operating in those circumstances. It shows that there is a market for that power, but it does not give a clear tilt to the idea that there is a coherent, consistent United Kingdom-wide market operating in any predictable direction.

We have a problem and the Minister should respond to the questions posed by the hon. Member for Dundee, East and tell us whether the flotation of the Scottish companies is likely to take place in about May. Will there be a full flotation and what would happen to the 40 per cent. if there was not? Presumably that percentage would be held by the Secretary of State for Scotland and that would have the advantage of helping to anchor those companies within Scotland.

Many of us are worried that the industry in Scotland may be floated as two independent companies based in Scotland in the short term, but those companies may merge or be taken over by interests from outside Scotland. That might not be in the long-term interests of the Scottish economy or the Scottish consumer.

There is a further concern in that Scotland offers one of the best potentials for developing renewable energies in Europe, but it is still not clear whether the regime that is being established will help or hinder that development. There is no evidence to suggest that the development will be brought forward at the pace that many of us would like.

Ironically, the Government have been so embarrassed by the under-pricing of the flotation of the regional companies in England that after some convolutions they have decided to float only 60 per cent. of the generating companies when the industry comes to market. The Government have created an uncertainty to which the Secretary of State for Energy alluded earlier. The Government have created the nucleus for the renationalisation of the industry if that is the wish of a future

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

Government. That is an odd position for them to have adopted given that, in general, they have tried to create a privatisation regime which would make re-nationalisation difficult and would not create the sort of football uncertainty in which industries have been kicked backwards and forwards in the past.

The issues that were raised during consideration of the electricity privatisation legislation have not been settled. We do not have a regime that is likely to encourage greater energy efficiency or conservation or the development of renewables and the reduction of our dependence on imports. Given the windfall accruing to the new companies, the suggestion mooted by myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) during consideration of the Electricity Bill, that all consumers not currently connected to the national grid should be connected and that that should be part of the terms of the privatisation, could now be afforded. The electricity industry's public relations have been substantially damaged by the mismanagement of the flotation. In rural areas, connection to the national grid might be a way of rebuilding confidence and demonstrating that privatisation does not mean that people in remote areas who require connection for socially desirable purposes should remain cut off because the market is no longer interested in them. The market can afford now to provide that connection and it should do so. People in rural areas are entitled to expect that.

If we have, as I believe as a nation we should have, an objective for electricity, it should be to promote conservation and the efficient use of our resources to ensure the rapid, efficient development of renewable alternatives to existing sources and to encourage diversity and reduce our dependence on imports. The Government are not entitled to claim that their privatisation is likely to achieve any of those things.

The Government have created a market, but one which they did not predict and one that has produced results which they could not have forecast and which has no coherent sense of direction. It may end up almost anywhere and result in a quite different set of speeches in a debate on the electricity industry in two, three, four or five years' time. If the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside is honest, he will be forced to acknowledge that.

It is time that the Government came clean about what they believe the future of the electricity industry should be in the national interest in practical terms. Frankly, the rhetoric as to whether it should be a nationalised industry or a privatised one, or whether the market should solve the problem, is irrelevant. If the industry does not meet our national interests, our economy will suffer extreme consequences. The Government have manifestly failed to demonstrate that the privatisation of electricity will meet the national interests which we believe are necessary and which I have defined. In a few years' time, I believe that they will be found wanting.

8.57 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): You will have noticed during this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there have been references to doubts about the continuity of electricity supplies when the generators are privatised. Are you aware that, while clockwork clocks are working in the Chamber, we do not have a continuity of supply to our electric clocks even before the electricity generators are privatised?

Some people wonder why we should want privatisation of the electricity industry. I have heard people in the street ask, "Why should we have privatisation when so many nationalised assets belong to the people already? They are our assets and they belong to us. Why should they be privatised and transferred to us in other ways?" I heard that said also about the privatisation of the water industry in particular and, to some extent, about the privatisation of the electricity industry. Even sceptics would agree that road transport performs far better when privatised, that British Telecom offers more choice, has better technology and is giving a far better service to the public in private ownership than it did in public ownership, and that the steel industry has changed from a loss maker to a profit maker as it has gone into private hands.

If proof is wanted of a new attitude that is brought about by privatisation, let us consider the privatisation of council houses—one of the greatest reforms of the Thatcher years, second only, probably, to handing the unions back to union members. Nobody believed that we, the people, owned council houses. Certainly the occupiers of council houses did not believe that they owned them, and those who did not live in council houses did not believe that they owned them, any more than Russian peasants believed that they owned the collective land that they were reluctant to farm. When council houses were owned by councils and occupied by tenants, no one bothered to paint their front doors bright colours, build extensions, or tidy their gardens as they do when they own their own property. When one really owns something, one invests in it, cares about it and has control over it, and that applies whether that is individual or collective ownership, or whether ownership is through using one's own money and savings or through a mortgage or borrowed money. So it is with nationalised industries. It is only when nationalised industries are privatised and are truly owned by individuals that people begin to care about them.

British Telecom shareholders are now quite rightly in uproar about the proposal to spend £50 million—some even say £100 million—on changing BT's logo and repainting all its vans and assets. I share their concern, particularly as the proposed logo seems to be nothing more than Mercury blowing his own trumpet.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, there is no doubt that the electricity privatisation is an outstanding success. The Jeremiahs said that the shares would not be sold, that there would be no demand for them and that privatisation would not work. In particular, the employees said that privatisation would not work. I attended meetings in Essex and elsewhere in this country, and hundreds of employees said that privatisation would not work, that the electricity industry would crumble, that we would not have continuity of supply, and that we would press light switches and nothing would happen. The directors of the Central Electricity Generating Board said that it would not work, and that we could not have proper control of a grid system if generators were outside public ownership.

However, when the electricity industry was offered to the public it was a record privatisation. There were 13 million applications, and 98 per cent. of eligible employees applied. They were not all Tories—many of them must

have been Labour voters. I wonder who the 2 per cent. who did not buy shares were. Could it be that the 2 per cent. of employees who did not buy shares were the managers and directors who doubted whether the privatisation would work? I do not think so, for two reasons. First, under nationalisation, the number of managers and directors in the electricity industry was far greater than 2 per cent. of the employees. Secondly, those same managers and directors are now busy organising consortia to build new power stations, coming up with schemes and projects to put up new plants, and arranging management buy-outs if they possibly can.

There has been a total reversal of the pessimistic views of the managers and directors. There is now realism. They are wholeheartedly entering into the privatisation process and bringing in more plant, capacity and equipment to help to create the competition that privatisation is all about.

Also, 97 per cent. of valid customers applied for shares, and 70 per cent. of all those who applied were able to get share allocations, all except the greedy who applied for far too many and were rightly ruled out perhaps because of their greed.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that far too little money was raised on privatisation, that another £8 billion could have been raised and that it would have paid for repairing all schools in the country and taken £100 off everyone's community charge. That may be so—£8 billion may do that; the hon. Gentleman did the calculation; I did not. However, I suspect that, if the price of electricity shares had been doubled to attempt to raise that extra £8 billion, no extra money would have been raised. On the contrary, far less would have been raised because I for one would not have bought my shares at twice the present price, and most people would think exactly the same.

I now refer to electricity prices. Relative to the recent past, electricity prices in this country are quite good. The Government have an excellent record. Over the past four years electricity prices fell by 4 per cent. in real terms. That is equivalent to about 1 per cent. in real terms each year. Under the Labour Government electricity prices rose, not by 1 per cent. per year but by 2 per cent. every six weeks. Therefore, our record is excellent in keeping price increases down. In the last year alone the price rise for electricity was 4 per cent. below inflation. The safeguards that have been brought in for the early years of privatisation mean that there should not be an increase above inflation until at least March 1993.

Although United Kingdom electricity prices are satisfactory relative to the recent past, we have to consider how they compare with prices outside the country. I do not think that they compare well with prices abroad. Yesterday I had a meeting with two main board directors of ICI who were talking to me about the chlorine industry which is a heavy user of electricity. They pointed out to me that the price of electricity to industry here is 2·9p per kWh, in Germany 2·4p per kWh, in the Netherlands 1·9p per kWh and in Italy, France and the United States 1·5p per kWh—almost half what British industry pays. Granted, the chlorine industry in this country is a beneficiary of the so-called large industrial consumer scheme which brings the price of electricity down to 2·4p per kWh; that enables the industry to compete with Germany at least if not with France and the United States.

The chlorine industry, which also produces alkali as a by-product, is a cornerstone of British industry. It is a globally competitive business. It is an important element of the United Kingdom economy, contributing £800 million a year to exports. It employs 18,000 directly and 54,000 indirectly. Yet the large industrial user scheme will be withdrawn as a result of privatisation and ICI will find that its chlorine industry can no longer compete with France and the United States. If the Secretary of State were here, he would know that the transitional arrangements for electricity privatisation last for eight years for the nuclear industry, eight years for renewables, five years for private generators, three years for British Coal, but only one year for large industrial consumers.

What are large companies like ICI to do? They are very worried about the loss of cheap electricity; they will have to pay many millions extra for electricity. They may stop investment in chlorine and alkali plant. Even worse, they may take their investment abroad. That would be much worse because it would never come back to this country, whereas, if they stop investment here, there is always an opportunity later for them to renew the investment and build here.

Ironically, the solution comes from the same source as the problem itself, namely, privatisation. If privatisation, by removing subsidies, puts up electricity prices to large users, privatisation would also enable them to build their own power stations and bring prices down again. It is the ICIs of the world that will build their own gas-fired generators and bring prices down by entering into consortia with the oil companies, the generators or the regional electricity companies.

There is another solution to high electricity prices. The high prices are to a large extent based on the fact that our coal prices are high. I give credit to the British coal industry. It has increased productivity, introduced high technology and brought prices down 40 per cent. in the last five years. But the fact remains that British coal is considerably more expensive than coal brought in from abroad.

So if we are to continue to use British coal we must bring prices down even further. British Coal said recently in response to threats from National Power that it will bring in at least half of its coal for electricity generation from abroad:

> "We are confident that when talks with National Power start we can put forward a competitive package. We think we can offer them a deal."

That was reported in the *Financial Times* on 15 January. I hope that British Coal can offer National Power a good deal because it is important that our coal industry should survive. It must survive not only for the sake of employment in Britain which is important, or social reasons, which are significant, but because British coal is a form of indigenous energy which we cannot afford to ignore.

A case could possibly be made for abandoning coal for electricity generation in favour of home-produced gas or oil from United Kingdom continental shale. But we cannot make the case for abandoning our coal in favour of foreign coal. There seems to be a scheme to abandon our coal in favour of either 100 per cent. foreign coal—which does not make much sense—or 50 per cent. foreign coal which does not make much more sense.

The case for maintaining a British coal industry is particularly relevant at times such as this when the world

[Dr. Michael Clark]

may go into conflict. The Gulf crisis and other crises like it could affect international shipping as well as oil supplies. Yet to continue to maintain the high price of electricity for domestic or industrial use, particularly in export-led industries, makes no sense either. We must have internationally competitive electricity prices. That means that we must have internationally competitive prices for domestically produced coal.

The privatisation of the electricity industry is forcing down the cost of generating and distributing electricity. I am convinced that privatisation of the mining industry will bring down the price of coal, to the benefit of both the coal mining industry and the electricity industry and, indeed, our whole economy. Electricity privatisation has been a great success. I am sure that in due course privatisation of the coal industry will also be a great success, not least for those who work in it.

9.12 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) for some of his remarks, particularly as he holds the position of Chairman of the Energy Select Committee. He has expressed his anxiety about the coal industry on previous occasions.

I shall be brief because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. The House will not be surprised if I direct my remarks to the effect that privatisation of the electricity industry has had on the coal industry. I am pleased that the Minister with responsibility for the coal industry is in his place.

Mr. Dobson: At present.

Mr. Lofthouse: At present, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) says. In his opening remarks, my hon. Friend referred to the duff advice that the Secretary of State has received from all these highly paid advisers. The previous Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), about whom we do not hear much these days, was in receipt of some first class advice in the Energy Select Committee report on the privatisation of electricity. The Committee sat for a long time and listened to much expert evidence. It came to a unanimous conclusion in its report. It advised the Government that they were in danger of receiving ill-conceived and misjudged advice. That proved to be the case. We heard this evening from my hon. Friend that the advice that the Government received from City advisers and others was later found to be wholly incorrect. If that right hon. Gentleman had taken the advice and delayed the privatisation of electricity until he had had time to think the matter out, he would not have got himself into such a mess and had to be replaced by the present Secretary of State to salvage something from it.

We are always expressing concern about the effect of electricity privatisation on the coal industry. We are aware that, since the miners' strike in 1984, the coal industry has come under attack from the Government. They have been hell-bent on running it down. From time to time, we have pointed out in this Chamber and in Select Committee reports that to run down the industry to the extent that the Government intend borders on the criminal. We have pointed out that, if we close so many mines that we cannot meet demand, we shall put ourselves in the hands of foreign competitors. We have been told all the time that that will not happen, because British Coal will eventually be able to compete. I have never accepted that, and I do not accept it now.

The Private Bill Committee, of which the hon. Member for Rochford was Chairman, took evidence and produced a special report on the application of the Associated British Ports to extend the ports at Immingham. Although the Committee accepted the case for the port, it made it clear that the decision was based on certain provisos. What were they? Paragraph 22 states:

> "Before the Committee came to make a formal decision on, first, the amendment proposed by the British Coal Corporation, and, secondly, the Preamble itself, we agreed that if the bill were allowed to proceed, this would be subject to conditions set out in paragraphs 25 and 26."

Paragraph 26 states:

> "In our view it is the Government's duty to take whatever steps are necessary, in the overall national interest, to protect the indigenous coal-mining industry."

That was finally accepted by the House, but none of the Committee's provisos about the coal industry has been honoured by the Government.

What do we see now? The sponsors of the Bill, Associated British Ports, are not to be the major shareholders in a company which is to be formed. Who are to be the major shareholders? We must believe recent reports. The *Financial Times* of 15 January tells us that National Power and PowerGen are to form a company along with Associated British Ports, but that the two power companies are to have 80 per cent. control of Associated British Ports. I do not know whether that was known during the passage of the Bill. It will be a cosy little arrangement.

We now see the reason for Mr. John Baker's speech yesterday, which was reported today in the *Yorkshire Post* and other newspapers. He is supposed to have made the speech at a privatisation briefing to regional newspaper editors. I think that that was the speech to which the hon. Member for Rochford referred. Mr. Baker said that, as far as he was concerned, 50 per cent. of the coal required by National Power and PowerGen would come from imports.

Dr. Michael Clark: Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman by telling him that there was no knowledge in the Committee at that time of any other owner of the establishment or the new jetty. At that time, the Committee had every reason to believe that the people who were applying for permission to extend the jetty would own it for some considerable time. In Committee, we asked about the possibility of sale, but there was no suggestion of that. A Bill parallel to that relating to Immingham, which contained a clause that required the company to have the ability to sell at any time it wanted, was thrown out, not least because it also contained a clause to enable it to sell the installation.

Mr. Lofthouse: I accept that explanation from the hon. Gentleman. Nevertheless, on 15 January it was reported that National Power and PowerGen would take an 80 per cent. stake in Associated British Ports. We then had another report from Mr. Baker, about plans to import 50 per cent. of the fuel necessary to generate electricity. National Power and PowerGen will take over the port that will receive that 50 per cent. of imported coal.

The hon. Member for Romford will be well aware that, just three weeks ago, the Secretary of State told the Select

Committee on Energy that the only fuel that will be provided for electricity generation in the next decade will be gas. If that is so, the Minister must realise that there will be no future for the coal industry, especially if the ports start to receive imported coal.

A few months ago, I told the House that I foresaw a coal industry of 10,000 men by the late 1990s. I was told that I was scaremongering, but I believe that we shall be left with a coal industry that employs 10,000 men at between 10 and 12 pits. I should like that confirmed or denied.

No wonder some of the hierarchy at British Coal—I have a big question mark against their names—were reported on 8 January as saying that British Coal must be privatised. That is what the commercial director of British Coal, Malcolm Edwards, said. I wonder how much effort has been made by some of that hierarchy in the past few years to enable our coal industry to compete with foreign competition. How keen have they been to meet that competition? The same Malcolm Edwards told the Select Committee that he could not wait for the day of privatisation of British Coal. He will have to look sharp, however, because there will be little left of British Coal to privatise.

Once again, I must remind the Minister and his Department of their responsibility to the mining communities. They must prepare the way for other jobs to enable those young men who have previously found employment in the mining industry to be given alternative work. They cannot be left on the scrap heap, as has happened hitherto.

9.23 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Time is running out, so I shall be brief.

If one were inclined to believe the Opposition, one would think that the only important thing about the privatisation process is the amount of money that one gets from the sale of the assets. Nothing could be further from the truth. The proceeds from the sale are obviously important for the Treasury, the taxpayer and public spending, but there are many more important consequences.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) kept going on about a half-price sale. He does not seem to understand that, whether one adopts current cost accounting or historical cost accounting, ultimately people will only pay what they think the assets are worth. They are only important to the lender who is lending money against those assets, or to the purchaser who believes that they will generate income or profit. The price to earnings ratio and the price per share are critical in that calculation.

One might argue about the price at which the assets of the electrical supply industry were sold, but in future the taxpayer will not be required to spend one penny on replacing plant and generating capacity. The case was made for a site on the Humber estuary at a cost of £1·5 billion, which was discussed on Monday in connection with the Killingholme Generating Stations (Ancillary Powers) Bill. That investment is being made by PowerGen and National Power, and not a penny is coming from the taxpayer. The whole of this country's generating capacity will eventually be replaced by privatised companies investing their profits and reserves.

Earlier, I tried to assist my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he tried to quote a Labour Front Bench spokesman. I believe that he was referring to the remark made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) in a press release dated 31 October 1987:

"I make this prediction: this Government will not succeed in privatising electricity before the next election. It is a non-runner."

Labour has said on a number of occasions that privatisation could never occur, yet it has been successful. There is highly motivated management in all 12 electricity companies, and in the two major generating companies.

The president of the New York power authority recently visited Britain, when I had an opportunity to meet him. As the head of one of America's leading power utilities, he came here to see what Britain was doing, and he concluded that we are now the front runners in the world in respect of the new way forward for the electricity supply industry.

Above all, privatisation has introduced competition. Major new projects are planned, involving not only combined cycled gas but combined heat and power projects. That has given a tremendous boost to the renewables industry, such as waste disposal. That would not have been possible without the new structure and the non-fossil fuel obligation.

As to price, industrial consumers have enjoyed fairly substantial decreases, with reductions of 15 per cent. not unheard of. Privatisation has been much attacked, maligned and misrepresented. Most of that has been a knee-jerk reaction to the historically accepted wisdom of the unions and of the coal lobby. Contrary to the predictions of Labour Members, privatisation has proved to be, and will continue to be, a great success for the taxpayer, the industry, its work force, shareholders, and the consumer.

9.27 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): It is not for me to suggest to the Government how they should privatise their industries, but I have never seen much sense in creating two massive generating companies where there was one before. Many opportunities existed for fragmenting the generating sector to create real competition, but that did not happen. Instead, we have privatisation proposals that are not so much unimaginative as desperate. That is understandable, given the litany of disaster that has plagued the privatisation process since the Government's plans were first drawn up.

Britain's nuclear capacity was hived off because the City panicked in the belief that it could not be sold. The old Central Electricity Generating Board supremo and long-time champion of nuclear energy, Lord Marshall, could not stomach that piece of political revisionism, and he took off for less machiavellian pastures. Mr. Bob Malpas, brought in from that citadel of political acumen, British Petroleum, stayed long enough with PowerGen to take part in the Hanson option travesty, before heading for the hills peppered with arrows from Mr. Ed Wallis's bow.

The Secretary of State is a business man of some repute who, it has been reported, has insisted on staying at his post to see this business through to the bitter end. Few can doubt his capacity for taking punishment. After all, he has had to rescue the privatisation of the electricity

[Dr. Kim Howells]

distributing companies from the shambles that he inherited from his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson). He may be capable of absorbing further punishment—coming from all sides judging by what I have read in the newspapers—as the privatisation of the generators proceeds.

I have no doubt that the right hon. Gentleman has the staying power to see that one through, too. He may see it through, but, by any standards, it would be the most curious flotation. Why does the Secretary of State believe that any investor should put money in one of the generating companies rather than the other? When the privatisation was mooted National Power, with its nuclear sector, looked promisingly dominant—there was always the lure that perhaps the rules might be bent in future to allow National Power to acquire substantial chunks of its smaller competitor—but I do not think that that is any longer the case. Both generating companies are now much of a muchness. Where is the lure for the potential investor, and especially for pension fund managers, the big banks and other large institutional investors, none of whom are renowned these days for their adventurism?

Recently a writer in the journal, *Power in Europe* commented:

"That phantom of the early Thatcher years, 'the new generation of shareholders', still floats around, but has never taken on much substance despite the vast amounts of public money thrown at it.

Buy them both, then the Government may say, spread the risk, even if you're not spreading it very far. This, however, makes the competitive ideals of privatisation into so much hot air. Two companies with the same shareholder profile, fighting each other like the two cats of Kilkenny, is not an idea which carries a great deal of conviction."

The sale of the regional electricity companies had a good press. In the *Daily Mail* on 4 November Michael Walters wrote:

"Get greedy. There is still time to clamber aboard the electricity privatisation gravy train if you have already had one go and fear you may not get enough."

The Sun put it even more simply, saying:

"The shares are priced at £2·40, so how come I'm only paying £1?"

Obviously hon. Members may provide their own answer to that question. It is not a silly contradiction in terms.

I have no doubt that a similar press reaction may greet the sale of the generators, as the Secretary of State strains every nerve and muscle, cuts every corner and offers every conceivable incentive to offload them. If he is successful in overcoming the difficulties, the right hon. Gentleman will have succeeded not only in reducing the future responsibilities of his Department to the management of the rumps of the nuclear and coal industries, but in sounding the death knells of those industries.

If the generators are to be believed, in 1993 there will be a great increase in coal importation and an unprecedented increase in the amount of natural gas burnt for power generation. I am afraid that the spectre of short-term considerations will displace the best of national energy strategies, such as they were.

To overcome statutes governing emissions into the atmosphere from power stations, premium low-sulphur coal will be imported and that premium fuel, natural gas, will be burnt in increasing quantities.

I fear that the new fiscal requirements will promote less rather than more research and development into systems of clean energy burn and into the application of the so-called fifth fuel—better building design, better insulation and greater efficiency of energy use. There will be an incentive for the chairmen of the companies to press for more use of electricity, for higher sales and higher profits.

I should like to know where this tendency stands in relation to the Government's much-heralded enthusiasm for a reduction in carbon dioxide and waste emissions into the environment, and to know what is to become of the great expertise and skills enshrined in our coal and nuclear industries.

I do not believe that this is the way to conduct the affairs of a business at the core of our economy. The generation and supply of electricity must be more, in policy terms, than the object of speculation by people seeking to make a fast buck. I have no doubt that the dedication and excellence of many of the staff at National Power and PowerGen will ensure that the lights continue to burn in this country, but I bitterly regret the missed opportunities in the break-up of a state monopoly for which I had no great love.

The Government could at the very least have ensured a degree of real competition which might have benefited consumers; real diversification of ownership and technology; incentives to seek and explore newer, more benign generating technologies; and the opportunity for sources of raw energy materials such as coal to have played a real part in the development and use of those technologies.

Instead, we are left with a barely separated pair of siamese twins which are more likely to caress each other than compete against each other. I fear that sooner rather than later those caresses will turn to price fixes and we shall be confronted by corporations of awesome power which will repay their creator, the Government—and the electorate whom they purport to represent—with the slaps of monopoly abuse, not the kisses of a dutiful child.

9.36 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Tonight we have been discussing what has gone wrong with this privatisation. Why has the Secretary of State lost so much of his reputation for financial canniness, why is this privatisation described as farcical in the *Financial Times* today, and why are relations between the management of National Power and PowerGen and the Department of Energy described as being "at rock bottom" in today's *Evening Standard*?

To find out what has gone wrong we must look at the three great untruths of the late 20th century, which hon. Members will have heard before. The first is, "The cheque is in the post;" the second, "Of course I will still want to privatise you in the morning, or at least 60 per cent. of you;" and the third, "This flotation has been excellent value for the British taxpayer."

The next stage in this privatisation is the issuing of the pathfinder prospectus on 1 February. The Secretary of State is hopeful about that procedure because the path that he will be hoping to find is the one that he has lost in the past few weeks—it could not have been more aptly named. The trail has gone cold for him and it has been a useful exercise in this Supply day debate to work out exactly what has gone wrong.

Three things seem to have gone wrong. First, the right hon. Gentleman has now decided to agree with us that, in respect of the distributors' flotation, he was tucked up by the City. He was advised by people whose ability to look after the interests of the taxpayer was not of the first calibre. He took their advice and sold the shares at what must be judged—the briefing given to the press by the Department of Energy agrees with this judgment—to have been a gross undervaluation of the assets that were got rid of. The Secretary of State would like to make that up by means of the generator sales. He believes that by using an entirely different technique he will cut out the lead underwriters. He intends to sell only 60 per cent. so that if the shares subsequently shoot up in value he will still have 40 per cent. left to sell at the higher price.

The Secretary of State missed that opportunity when the distributing companies were floated. He did not listen to our advice or to that of independent commentators in universities or City firms who were not directly involved in the flotation. Furthermore, he did not listen to the advice of those involved in the industry at both management and union level. If the Secretary of State made a mistake when he floated the distribution companies he should not try to cover his tracks when floating the generating companies to get himself back into the good books of the Public Accounts Committee when in a year or so it considers the privatisation of the electricity supply industry. If a mistake was made and the distribution companies were undervalued, it would be better if the Secretary of State came to the House of Commons to plead for forgiveness and said, "Yes, I made a mistake. I had lousy advisers. I did it in a rush. I did not consider the best interests of the taxpayer. I tried to sell the industry as quickly and as cheaply as I could in order to get it out of the way and I hoped that the Government's public relations machine would be able to deal with all the problems that might arise", rather than attempt to correct his mistakes by using an entirely different technique to sell the generating companies.

The Secretary of State has appointed new advisers to assist with the sale of the generating companies. He hopes that they will be able to overcome some of the problems that arose when the distribution companies were sold, due to the embarrassing rise on the first day to a 60p premium in some cases and to the even greater embarrassment of finding that one company that had been privatised only the year before—Welsh Water—immediately leapt in and bought a 10 per cent. predatory stake in South Wales Electricity, a distribution company that had been floated only the day before.

Welsh Water used the same advisers as the Government used for the flotation of the electricity distribution companies. How could it be right for Kleinwort Benson, which had advised the Secretary of State for Energy on the sale of the electricity distribution companies, to advise Welsh Water at the same time on how to acquire a 10 per cent. stake in a company that was being privatised by the Department of Energy? How can it be right for Smith New Court, the Secretary of State's new advisers on the stockbroking side, which has, as a non-executive director, a previous Secretary of State for Energy, to have advised Welsh Water on how to acquire a 10 per cent. stake in South Wales Electricity when it was also the client stockbroker for South Wales Electricity? That is working on both sides of the fence in a way that John le Carre would not dare to put into a spy novel about double crossing. That, however, is what is happening and that is the calibre of the people who are used by the Secretary of State.

Another reason why privatisation has gone seriously wrong is that people are beginning to appreciate more and more how chaotic is the structure of the industry that has been devised. By 1994, and completely by 1998, generating companies will be able to supply us with electricity as well as to generate it. Distributors of electricity will also be generating it.

That will be unique throughout the civilised world. There will be a dual supply electricity function. We shall not know exactly from whom we should obtain our electricity and we shall not know whose primary function it is to supply electricity. There will not be the simple three-way structure that most people understand—generating companies, a transmission monopoly and distribution companies. There will be double generating companies and double distribution companies. Any company will be able to supply a new housing estate with electricity. Supplies will be obtained from any company or from a middleman and there will be stock market trading. Such a chaotic dual structure is beginning to frighten people. They believe that that is not a sensible structure for what has already been described as the backbone of any civilised industrial and domestic society.

Another reason why I think that the Secretary of State will perhaps get only half the number of non-executive directorships when he resigns as it looked as if he might get a year ago—it will only be about 50 now—is that he has lost any idea as to what the privatisation of electricity supply is for. He has tried today to give some of the original reasons for it. He said that it is to promote competition. We know that if he intended to promote competition, he should have been breaking the generating side into far more than two. He should have been selling off power stations to their employees or creating a minimum of four of five companies. The two companies will create a registered duopoly that will cause trouble for time immemorial. That is not the way to promote competition.

The Secretary of State said that it would promote wider share ownership, but we know that even with the distribution companies, contrary to what the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said—I may have misheard him—it looks as if 95 per cent. of British consumers did not apply for shares. Wider share ownership is hardly being achieved by an ojective of reaching 5 per cent. of the British public. I realise that the hon. Member for Rochford said that he bought shares and perhaps his wife and children did too. However, as far as one can tell, roughly 95 per cent. of consuming families did not apply or obtain shares in their local distribution company. I shall be happy if the Under-Secretary of State corrects those figures when he replies.

Conservation is extremely important and the contribution being made by the new structure to the conservation of energy is zero. At the time of yet another major crisis in the middle east that must be at the forefront of our minds.

Mr. Harry Barnes: I want to use this intervention to put the record straight. Earlier the Secretary of State, in replying to an intervention, said that I was not present during a debate on east midlands electricity. In fact, it was my debate during proceedings on the Consolidated Fund.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

I spoke for 34 minutes and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) spoke for 22 minutes and it was the Secretary of State who was not present.

Mr. Morgan: Nobody who was there at 5.30 in the morning will forget that debate. I do not think that I have yet fully recovered from it.

Having established the problems that the Secretary of State has with his credibility following the deterioration in the view that is now being taken of whether this is a feasible exercise, we come to the question of what he should do now. What we are getting is vast doses of creative accountancy. Most of the Conservative contributors to the debate have tried in the patronising way of insurance brokers and accountants—with which the Conservative party is richly stocked—to talk down to Opposition Members as if we know nothing about economics. We are opposed not to economics but to creative accountancy. In explaining why £35 billion worth of assets, as advertised in the prospectus given some years ago to the Conservative party conference by the right hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), will raise no more than £10 billion they are saying that that is what the market will bear and that we should understand that. In fact, it shows the fraud of the privatisation process. The Secretary of State is telling us that one is buying not a company, the management or the assets but an artificially created Government-rigged income stream and if that is the income stream, the City advisers will say what should be paid for it. If that is privatisation, it is a fraud on the taxpayer and the purchasers because they are not buying a private company but a form of rigged national savings from the Government.

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morgan: That would be unwise given the instructions of the Government Front Bench.

The Secretary of State and I had a conversation on the night on which the previous Prime Minister resigned. He had been the campaign manager for the previous Prime Minister for all of eight hours. I said to him, "If you can do for electric privatisation what you did for the campaign of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), I do not think that privatisation of the electricity supply industry will go very far." I did not realise that he would take me at my word.

In a previous life, the Secretary of State was a practitioner in insolvency. He called in the receiver for the campaign of the previous Prime Minister. I suggest that he now calls in the receiver for the privatisation of the electricity supply industry.

9.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): We have been debating the success of creating a modern and competitive electric supply industry. The flotation of the regional electricity companies last December received massive public endorsement. Quite naturally, that success has left the Opposition in some confusion, because, with millions more small shareholders and millions of new shareholders, millions fewer people will be prepared to tolerate a return to centralised, state-owned industries. That is why they said that it would not work and that the sale would not take place.

That was denied by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who has become rather forgetful. In October 1987, his predecessor—perhaps this is why he is his predecessor—the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), said:

> "The Government's privatisation programme is in tatters . . . I make this prediction: this Government will not succeed in privatising electricity before the next election."

Privatisation is taking place, and it does work. It takes the Labour party to describe more than 12 million applications for shares as a failure.

If Labour Members are bad forecasters, they are even worse accountants. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras and his hon. Friends persist in comparing the proceeds of the public sale of the regional electric companies with the replacement cost of the assets sold. There is no excuse for that, because they have been given several accountancy lessons by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. By now, they should know that that is not a fair or valid comparison, but I shall try to illustrate it in language that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras can understand.

Has the hon. Gentleman ever tried to sell his car at replacement cost? If he tried to sell his car outside his home at the price of a new car, he would not have much luck, but he is inviting the Government to put a replacement-cost price tag on the shares for sale. It is a wholly misleading and bogus comparison, but perhaps it gives us a glimpse of what a mess the national accounts would be if the Labour party took office again.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith) said, we heard a lot of the wisdom of hindsight from Opposition Members. We were in no position to know that the market would rise after the price was set, and we were not to know what a popular success the flotation would be. We therefore had to devise a way of reducing——

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Will the hon. Gentleman forgive me? He pushed me right up against the clock; and I have some other remarks to make.

We therefore had to find a way of reducing the allocation to institutions and overseas investors, which we did, while continuing to give preference to registered customers, in so far as the rules of the stock exchange allowed. Ninety-seven per cent. of customer applications received shares, and a quarter of all applications were met in full. We have taken another giant step forward in wider share ownership, and Conservative Members take pride in that.

I hope that we will proceed to the flotation of the generating companies over the next two months. The competitive and market positions of those two companies are, of course, very different from those of the 12 regional companies, and there are therefore corresponding differences in the offer structure.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State described why we will retain, for the time being, 40 per cent. of the shares. This will still ensure that the companies are placed firmly in the private sector, and the Government will be able to participate in any future increase in the value of the

generating companies. It is therefore a mark of confidence in the future of the companies, and in no way a retreat from our belief in private sector ownership and operation.

The hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) mentioned Scotland. The flotation of the Scottish companies is planned for May or June. The details will be decided by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland in the light of market conditions at that time. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)—has listened to hon. Members' detailed points.

The programme of privatisation upon which we have embarked is already achieving a double benefit—substantial proceeds for the taxpayer and wider share ownership, particularly a high degree of employee share ownership. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) reminded the House that some 98 per cent. of eligible employees have taken up shares in the regional companies.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) was dismissive about the number of shareholders that these companies now have, but we know that it is a far more genuine form of public ownership than having one monolithic state corporation controlled by a handful of politicians and civil servants in Whitehall.

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am answering the hon. Gentleman's points. He also referred to two generating companies, which he described as a duopoly. I remind him that there are three in England alone. The hon. Gentleman perhaps forgot Nuclear Electric plc, as well as the Scottish companies and the growing number of independent generators.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) mentioned coal. I respect his comments, as I respect him. The electricity market puts all fuel suppliers under pressure, but I believe that British Coal will continue to win a substantial share of the market if it maintains the productivity improvements that have occurred in recent years.

Energy efficiency was mentioned and forms part of the Opposition's critical motion. It is alleged that energy efficiency is somehow put at risk by the new electricity structure which we have created. The reverse is the case. Instead of electricity costs being buried in state monopolies, we have created a system of open competitive pricing, so that the customer can choose the most price-efficient, most energy-efficient, supply. Exactly the right price signals are now sent to those who are in a position to take energy-saving measures.

So it is with the generators—instead of simply passing through all their costs on the old cost-plus basis, we have now created a structure whereby they will make more money by being more fuel efficient. The clearest possible incentive for energy efficiency is now built into the system.

We have developed a successful formula of public regulation and private operation. This has guided our reforms in the Water Act 1989, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Electricity Act 1989.

The Opposition's reaction to these developments is to go back to nationalisation, state control and political interference, putting ownership, regulation and control back in the same hands. That is a recipe for stagnation and inefficiency.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 226, Noes 297.

Division No. 39] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs. Irene *(Paisley, N.)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellotti, David
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Benton, Joseph
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard

Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terence
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Thomas McAvoy.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Rt Hon Alan *(Plymouth)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
McCrindle, Sir Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Mudd, David
Neale, Sir Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael

Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Sir Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Rt Hon Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the restructuring of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales, the highly successful flotation of the regional electricity companies and its plans for floating National Power and PowerGen; and welcomes the many benefits this privatisation will bring to consumers, employees and the taxpayer.

Orders of the Day

OVERSEA SUPERANNUATION BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of Seven Members, Four to be nominated by the House and Three by the Committee of Selection;

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than the fourteenth day after this day; and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents;

That if no such Petition as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) above is presented, or if all such Petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Committee, the order for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be committed to a Standing Committee;

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against the Petition;

That the Committee have power to report from day to day the Minutes of the Evidence taken before it;

That Three be the Quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee.—[Mr. Sackville.]

BROADCASTING, &c.

Ordered,

That Mr. Graham Bright be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting, &c., and that Mr. Humfrey Malins be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

East Lancashire Training and Enterprise Council

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am grateful for the opportunity for the debate. I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) and the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike).

Over the past few years a great deal has been written and said on the subject of training. I welcome that, as I welcome the recognition by the Government that improvement in training is one of the keys to Britain's future prosperity. The Government's training programme is probably one of the most ambitious and successful that the country has ever seen. In deciding last year to spend £2·5 billion on training, two and a half times as much in real terms as in 1979, the Government were acting wisely. We must ensure that young people and the long-term unemployed can hold down jobs by equipping them with the modern skills which employers demand and need to have in a competitive world.

Training benefits employee and employer alike. The employee who has undergone training is more likely to get a job, to keep it and to earn a reasonable wage. The employer benefits from his work force's greater skills and efficiency which will allow him to be more competitive.

To be successful, any training scheme must have the enthusiastic support of employers. I believe that training and enterprise councils have that support. They have it because the councils are employer-led, making use of local people who have proved their success in industry and in commerce. Local people are the best to deal with training and enterprise because they know the needs of the area. I welcome the setting up of the 82 training and enterprise councils and wish to comment especially on East Lancashire TEC.

I am confident that ELTEC will succeed in ensuring high-quality training in east Lancashire. Having known Mark Price when he was managing director of a local subsidiary of GEC, I believe that we are fortunate to have him as the chief executive, as we are to have Peter Hornby as deputy chief executive and Tony Cann as ELTEC's enthusiastic chairman.

In addition to industrialists, ELTEC has on its board an ethnic director, a trade unionist, the leader of Lancashire county council, the local chief education officer and the manager of a local area hospital group. While half the management team is seconded from the Training Agency, the other half is, somewhat unusually, from areas outside the Training Agency. The board and staff at ELTEC are dedicated to their mission to improve the economy of east Lancashire. There used to be a saying that Britain's bread hangs by Lancashire's thread. Sadly, with the decline of Lancashire's textile industry, that is no longer true. Nevertheless, manufacturing is still of vital importance to the economy of not only east Lancashire but the United Kingdom as a whole.

ELTEC is the TEC in which the proportion of the work force in manufacturing is highest—some 49 per cent. in Hyndburn compared with 24 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. Not surprisingly, therefore, I regard East Lancashire TEC as the most important one. Its success or failure is of vital importance to the local community and the country.

Mark Price and his team are well equipped to ensure that people go on training courses which are appropriate to their needs and the needs of potential employers, thus ensuring that the training provided leads directly to employment. They are well qualified to ensure that the many small and growing businesses that we have in east Lancashire receive the necessary support and advice to enable them to prosper. As TECs are employer-led, they are well qualified to ensure that there is an increased commitment to training by local employers. So often in the past, that commitment was not there totally, and when necessary cost-cutting exercises had to be undertaken, training always suffered.

In a recession such as we are experiencing it is not easy to persuade companies to invest in people, not because they do not believe that it is right to do so, but because they face serious short-term financial difficulties. By identifying and promoting the benefits of training, to not only the local community and individuals but local companies and their long-term needs, ELTEC seeks to change previous attitudes towards training and raise the priority of investment in skills.

ELTEC has arranged a major conference on 22 January to promote the training ethic in east Lancashire, and provide company membership of ELTEC. Some 500 people are expected to attend. The theme of the conference will be "training is the future". It certainly is the future for my constituency and for east Lancashire if we are to prevent the decline of the area and persuade our young people to stay there, work there and eventually invest there and not, as so many have done, to migrate to the south-east.

Young people need to have ready access to good information about local education and training opportunities, the qualifications to which they lead, and the educational, training and employment possibilities that lie beyond. They need good counselling and a clear statement of their entitlement to future education and training.

In Hyndburn there are four providers of youth training. Business Support Unit Ltd. is ELTEC's third largest YT provider and currently offers training to 398 young people. North Lancs Training Group is one of the few group training schemes operating in the furniture and timber industries. The scheme caters for approximately 180 young people at present, across a range of craft occupations which include cabinet-making, carpentry, joinery and wood machinery. Lucas Body Systems, Rists, part of the Lucas group, has set up a purposely equipped training centre near its Accrington works, where 42 young people are currently undergoing training in a variety of production and assembly skills, while Hyndburn Community Services Project, affiliated to the excellent Accrington and Rossendale college, is a facility of which the primary function is the development of young people with special needs. It seeks to prepare its 71 young people with the skills and motivation to succeed in open employment. Those four schemes account for £1·17 million of ELTEC's YT budget and all four do excellent work.

In addition to those schemes, others in east Lancashire offer specialist training, such as Training 2000 which is the major provider of engineering craft and technician

training, while the construction industry training board, via the local college, offers construction craft training in a variety of occupations.

We know what we have to do to ensure a bright future for east Lancashire. By setting up the TECs the Government have increased the opportunity to do it. ELTEC has already demonstrated that it is equal to the task.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): The hon. Gentleman has emphasised the importance of training and ELTEC in north-east Lancashire, which includes my constituency. Does he recognise that training is important not only in the areas which he mentioned but for management? If industry and business are to survive, we also need trained, experienced, expert management.

Mr. Hargreaves: Yes, I agree with that and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for being here to make that point. We must ensure that nothing prevents ELTEC from achieving its aims.

In creating the TECs the Government clearly recognised that the traditional programmes were not producing the results required. I hope that the Minister will tell us whether he believes that that was in some way due to the programmes themselves. If so, will he give an assurance that the Government are prepared to listen to what TECs, which are close to the problems, see as necessary? If TECs are to be successful, it is important that the views of those with responsibility for making them so are not only listened to, but acted on. Equally, it is vital that TECs consult widely local interests and local expertise in education and training, and act upon that information.

I welcome the fact that employers' investment in training has risen to record levels. I hope that that will encourage the Minister to ensure that TECs do not fail to do the job that they have been given to do through a lack of resources. It is a matter of some concern that in real terms the budget for 1991-92 is about 30 per cent. below expenditure incurred in 1989-90 when TECs were first created—£16 million last year compared with £13·4 million in 1991-92. It would be a tragedy if underfunding meant that ELTEC could not succeed as effectively as it might otherwise do.

All of us would want the Minister to assure us that the reduction in expenditure has taken full account of the skills gap between ourselves and our international and European competitors. Have we taken account of recent developments in training in other countries—for example, in Italy, France and Germany? Bearing in mind the effect of those developments by our competitors, will our training budget, not least that of TECs, be kept under constant review? We must not give TECs too many tasks and too few resources. The main task is to put the money available to good use.

In the past four years the Government, to their credit, have increased spending on training by 60 per cent. at a time when unemployment fell by half. It does not seem unreasonable, therefore, to expect more resources for training now that unemployment is, unfortunately, increasing.

TECs were created to deal with local circumstances. I believe that they will succeed, but the chances of success will be greatly increased if TECs are allowed to get on with the task that they have been given and if bureaucracy or interference is kept to an absolute minimum, once the Government are satisfied that TECs are consulting locally and, therefore, can act in the best interests of the area which they serve.

It is vital for the future of our country that we succeed in changing attitudes to training, so that the skills of our people compare favourably with those of our competitors. Yesterday someone talking on a completely different subject said to me that if something is worth exhortation, it is worth legislation. I hope that attitudes can be changed by education and exhortation, but the issue is so important that neither legislation nor fiscal steps should be ruled out if education and exhortation fail.

10.28 pm

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) for allowing me to contribute to this Adjournment debate. I am particularly delighted to have the opportunity to speak in what I believe is the first debate in this House on a training enterprise council. As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, when I was a Minister at the Department of Employment I had a modest role in the creation and promotion of TECs, and therefore I have a particular interest in them.

I was fortunate to have an early opportunity last year to visit East Lancashire training enterprise council, my local TEC, and to hear from the chairman, Tony Cann, and the chief executive, Mark Price, of their development plans. As my hon. Friend has said, ELTEC is fortunate in having such committed and enthusiastic leadership.

I shall concentrate my remarks on the organisations in Pendle which work with ELTEC and the delivery of programmes. My constituency has the second highest percentage of people in manufacturing employment in the country—just over 55 per cent.

The largest provider in Pendle is the Pendle Training Group which focuses on training in engineering, electronics, electrical work, construction, care, catering and retail. It operates from a purpose-built centre in Nelson under Jim Heaton and his team. It is reputed to have the best equipped CNC training facility in the United Kingdom. Pendle Training Group has a close relationship with ELTEC, which influences between 75 per cent. and 80 per cent. of its activity. It is a major provider of employment training and youth training. Through ET it is providing continuous updating skills to several hundred adults and it is striving to develop a compact for engineering skills with local employers in conjunction with ELTEC.

In addition the Pendle Training Group has had a dialogue with Nelson and Colne college, my local tertiary college, with a view to developing training in tourism and leisure.

The Pendle re-employment project under Marian Wiseman focuses on providing training for clerical-administration work, woodworking, some building, horticulture and care. It also provides a number of places for trainees with special needs. I look forward to presenting to PRP its approved training organisation status award—the first in east Lancashire for employment training—on 25 January.

In recent discussions with PRP I know that it is concerned about three particular matters. First, it is concerned about the role of the training agent. It would prefer to be able to recruit directly. Secondly, it is worried about the likely 31 per cent. reduction in overall funding

[Mr. John Lee]

and either having to manage with less money per trainee or having to cut the number of trainees. That is a particularly worrying feature with unemployment locally beginning to rise. Thirdly, last year, 80 per cent. of PRP's trainees had special needs and it is especially concerned about their needs given the financial pressures. It has also asked me to ask my hon. Friend the Minister whether any future developments are planned towards community-based projects, perhaps on a pilot basis.

Another provider is College Training Services in Colne under the direction of Ken Williamson. He welcomes the flexibility that ELTEC has brought to training, but again that college has drawn attention to the fact that there has been a reduction in the amount of funding available to deliver quality training as compared with the previous Manpower Services Commission—Training Agency structure for special needs trainees. While ELTEC is trying to make performance-related funding applicable to all schemes, College Training Services makes the point that there will be a vast difference in performance achievement between more and less able young people.

We also have a number of other specialist organisations in Pendle that work closely with ELTEC. BCD under David Owen occupies a prime site in the Arndale centre in Nelson and provides hair and beauty care skills with an almost 100 per cent. record of placement throughout north-east Lancashire in hairdressing salons. It is especially pleasing that a substantial number of its former trainees have gone on to become self-employed.

For some years Rolls-Royce at Barnoldswick has undertaken apprentice training under the auspices of YT. Undert training manager Ray Aspin the company has 53 apprentices at various stages of training who are currently following EITB—engineering industry training board—programmes. Brian Carter, the facility manager of the Barnoldswick plant, is a director of ELTEC.

The Pendle Enterprise Trust under director Ron Morrish is currently working with ELTEC on the enterprise allowance scheme and on improving the quality of Young Enterprise. It hopes to develop an increasingly positive relationship with ELTEC.

The TECs programme is a unique concept which is succeeding in bringing local industry into a more formalised training structure and, for the first time, giving those running local companies a real opportunity to target skills training to the needs of regional industry. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to do all that he can to ensure that ELTEC and others like it have the resources to fulfil their role. Future prosperity and employment opportunities demand nothing less.

10.34 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Robert Jackson): I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) and for Pendle (Mr. Lee) for raising such an important subject in this Adjournment debate. I pay tribute to the role played by my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle in establishing the training and enterprise councils when he was at the Department of Employment, and, as he said, this is the first debate that there has been on them. I hope that it will not be the last, and that future debates will be as well-informed and constructive as tonight's debate has been.

Training and enterprise councils have been a runaway success that certainly includes east Lancashire. The TEC initiative was launched in March 1989, and in less than two years we have seen established the full network of 82 TECs in England and Wales. Forty six are fully operational, and the remainder will join them by this summer. That remarkable achievement was possible only because of the enthusiasm and commitment of 1,200 key business and community leaders in all parts of England and Wales. They and their officers and staff have given time and energy in putting their TECs on the map, and east Lancashire is no exception. In my travels since last July, I have met many of the people concerned, and it is phenomenal to see the effort that is being deployed. I support the remarks made by both my hon. Friends about the work of particular individuals.

The chairman of east Lancashire's TEC, Mr. Tony Cann, has proved his ability in the commercial world many times over. He has set up a number of manufacturing companies which have become world leaders and which have won the Queen's award for export. He has built up a strong board of TEC directors, and continues to shape it, to ensure that it is representative of the business interests and people of east Lancashire.

We now have, for the first time ever, a training and enterprise structure led by top business leaders and other key local people who have the power and the resources to apply local solutions to local needs. The TECs have a major role at local level, in bringing about the high-skill, high-productivity economy that this country needs. There is a growing consensus about the importance of that initiative. Last week, I participated in a meeting of the National Economic Development Council, and was delighted to see support for the initiative coming from the Trades Union Congress as well as from the Confederation of British Industry. I pay tribute also to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) for his constructive intervention in tonight's debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn emphasised that the principle underlying training and enterprise councils is that they should be business-led and local. I may add that they are based also on the principle of voluntarism. Localism is important because of the immense variety in different circumstances, labour markets and training markets throughout the country. There is an enormous difference between, for example, east Lancashire and my own area of south-west Oxfordshire.

The fundamental reason for putting business in the lead in training emerged clearly from a study of training funding conducted in 1986, which showed that, at that time, individuals invested £8 billion annually; the state invested £7 billion, which included company tax concessions; and employers invested £18 billion. This country's training effort depends absolutely on the attitude and approach of employers, and it is a mistake to put the state at the centre of the picture. The situation can be transformed only by employers acting upon their responsibilities to pursue better profits, by improving their training efforts.

We must build on that through business leadership. The Government spending on training to which both my hon. Friends alluded increased substantially over the past

decade—some threefold in real terms—but the fact remains that any real improvement will come by business leadership.

We attach great importance to the principle of voluntarism, and in that I do not entirely agree with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn about exhortation and legislation. One can make a good theoretical case for exercising legislative compulsion, but the translation of legislative compulsion into reality involves the creation of political and bureaucratic structures, which detract from the essentially market-based nature of training and from the necessity that training efforts should be employer-led. The TECs represent an option for a market-based and employer-led approach to training which is going to achieve what we need to achieve—a fundamental cultural change in attitudes to training, with ownership of training programmes by individuals and employers. The problem with legislative compulsion is that it does not support those as it should.

Britain has quite a lot of experience of legislative compulsion in training. That experience was not a positive experience. If we have a training problem, its roots go back to the 15 years when we exercised extensive structures of legislative compulsion. The only country which has such an extensive arrangement for compulsion is France. The other countries upon which we might choose to model ourselves, notably the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan and the United States, are essentially using voluntaristic approaches to training.

Therefore, our basic approach is to use the training and enterprise councils to ensure that local business leadership, under contract to the Government, can manage Government training programmes and build upon them as a basis for improving the total training effort under the auspices of business. In that connection, an important new initiative was recently announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. The investors in people initiative sets a new national standard for effective investment in people. It is a standard which will be the foundation for an action programme, aimed at encouraging employers to plan, act on and to review the training needs of all their employees to achieve business objectives. The investors in people initiative has been developed by the national training task force, and the training and enterprise councils will lead on its local implementation in their area. It will be the device by which they are able to carry a crusade of training into local businesses and local firms, and that will play a key role in the transformations that we are seeking.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn referred to the idea that TECs should be local. We are very keen that they should be given the freedom to find local solutions to local problems. That is something which the TECs have stressed very strongly and which we have been meeting. At least 25 per cent. of payments for youth training and employment training will normally be based on outputs, rather than time spent on programmes, and that will give the TECs a powerful incentive to decide how they will arrange for the people in their community to have high-quality training, leading to nationally-recognised vocational qualifications and to worthwhile jobs.

We have changed the system for the funding of the enterprise allowance scheme to give greater flexibility, and we have also merged budgets for business training and the enterprise allowance scheme so that TECs will have the flexibility that they have been asking for. Furthermore, we have transferred the responsibility for work-related further education—a programme worth about £100 million a year—to the TECs. That is evidence of our confidence in the future of TECs. Overall the budgets available for training enterprise councils have increased.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pendle asked about the possibility of community-based projects. That is an interesting idea and there may be a possible role for TECs in that. I have tried to outline the way in which we intend the TECs to develop and to grow. My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn asked for an assurance that the Government will listen to the training and enterprise councils and I am happy to give that assurance. We have indeed listened very closely to what they have been saying, and that is the basis upon which we have given the flexibilities that I have just described.

TECs can benefit from a provision announced in the last Budget which means that companies making donations to TECs can claim tax relief.

As I have emphasised, we have also cut down the bureaucracy to a minimum compatible with the principle of accountability to Parliament for the spending of taxpayers' funds.

TECs are unique and are learning from one another. We are striving to achieve the right balance between giving them the freedom that they need and the accountability required. TECs, more than any other enterprise, have the ability to bring about far-reaching and lasting benefits in the local economy. They will directly impact upon the well-being of a great number of people, from management to the operative level in every part of England and Wales, and it is in everybody's interest to ensure that they succeed.

My hon. Friend knows that ELTEC has been operational since May of last year. The board has drawn up creative and challenging plans and set itself a number of major tasks. Its members are using youth training and employment training to create more opportunities in the manufacturing sector, which, as both my hon. Friends stressed, and as the hon. Member for Burnley said, is so important in the east Lancashire economy, by offering training in greater skills.

They are encouraging manufacturing companies to recruit more from the ethnic community. At the same time they seek to develop the skills of the ethnic community to meet the needs of local industry. They are promoting greater co-ordination of enterprise agencies and others to improve the quality of services offered to start-ups and small businesses.

The centrepiece of east Lancashire TEC's plans is the establishment of a lifetime training programme. The programme's objective is to promote, organise and pump-prime the development and training of the existing workforce in east Lancashire. It aims to commission by March this year some 20,000 hours of training. This is an exciting proposal and it may well provide valuable lessons for replication in other parts of the country. It sits well with the investors in people initiative. I am certain that encouragement by way of pump-priming activities and the fostering of commitment to training and development will be much more effective than compulsory levy systems, which have failed us in the past. I look forward very much to hearing how lifetime training develops.

East Lancashire TEC also recognises the potential for developing education and industry links and has already drawn up plans to develop compact arrangements, to

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

which my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle referred, in its area. As my hon. Friends know, east Lancashire's objectives have an important economic focus, as clearly set out in the TEC board's objectives. But let me quickly say that the TEC board also has a clear understanding of the social aspects of its responsibilities and of the need to include the disadvantaged within the provision and initiatives of the TEC. I have already given the example in respect of the ethnic communities. The fundamental measure of east Lancashire TEC's success will be the added value that it will bring to the local community.

I know that my hon. Friends support the TEC initiative and east Lancashire TEC in particular. I give my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn my assurance that the Government will do everything in their power to ensure that the TECs prosper and grow and become a major vehicle for economic regeneration and development in every part of England and Wales, including east Lancashire itself.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 17 January 1991

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CARDIFF BAY BARRAGE BILL *[Lords]*
Order for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday 24 January.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

MIDLAND METRO BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 24 January.

STANDARD LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Read a Second time, and committed.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Political Developments

1. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his talks with the constitutional parties about future political developments in Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Brooke): I am continuing to explore, with the main constitutional parties, the possibility of formal talks encompassing all the issues that they consider relevant. My aim is to establish a basis for such talks that would safeguard everyone's essential interests, and I plan to have further exchanges in the near future to take matters forward.

Mr. Mitchell: May I and, I am sure, the whole House join in congratulating my right hon. Friend on the recent happy news of his engagement? May I also pay tribute to my right hon. Friend's skill and patience in trying to ensure that the talks with the constitutional parties about future political developments in Northern Ireland move ahead? Is he more optimistic now than he was last autumn that some progress may be made?

Mr. Brooke: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his congratulations. I do not know whether there is any interaction between the two processes in which I have been involved. I remain firmly convinced that all those people with whom I have had talks are seriously committed to the discussions, on the basis that if formal talks can be launched in a framework satisfactory to all, the process could make a major contribution to the peace, stability and good government of Northern Ireland.

Mr. William Ross: On a day when the world is having the most vivid and terrible reminders about where claims to a neighbour's territory can lead, is the Secretary of State aware that we are happy that he is engaged in these talks, especially as the people of Northern Ireland have endured so much over the years because of similar claims being legitimised in the eyes of terrorists? May we express the hope that he will listen to wiser counsel than some of his predecessors have done?

Does the right hon. Gentleman further understand that unionists are deeply disappointed that Dublin's intransigence blocked the progress that he was making to such a swift end last July? Is he aware that many people in the unionist community are worried that this is simply a spinning out of the talks until the next general election? Therefore, will he try to move the matter ahead as quickly as he can?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his initial remarks and his welcome for the talks that are taking place. The approach that we have been pursuing in recent months has been dictated by the fact that political parties on both sides of the community divide in Northern Ireland want discussions to cover matters that must necessarily involve the Irish Government. Any talks intended to address all the relevant relationships must be set up on a basis with which all concerned are comfortable. It is not a question of one side or the other having preconditions or creating obstacles. Conflicting positions have yet to be reconciled.

Mr. Kilfedder: May I congratulate the Secretary of State on his engagement and also on the patience that he has demonstrated in pursuing these talks? I am sure that people in Northern Ireland will wish to join me in thanking him and wishing him all the best for both reasons. Has Dublin agreed to any conditions for beginning its involvement in discussions or talks on political developments in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes and hope that they extend to the talks in which we are now engaged.

I think that it is generally understood that there is a difference of view over the circumstances in which the north-south strand of any talks should start. That impasse has not yet been resolved, but I hope that it will be.

Local Government

2. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for the reform of local government.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): We have no present plans to reform the general structure of local government in Northern Ireland. However, we remain ready to consider any proposals for transferring political power and responsibility to locally elected representatives in Northern Ireland on a basis that would be likely to prove widely acceptable and which guaranteed fair and equitable treatment for everyone in the local authority area.

Mr. Taylor: I thank the Minister for his reply. Will he take this opportunity to clarify the role of the local government boundary commissioner, whose appointment was announced yesterday? There is some confusion in Northern Ireland. Is the boundary commissioner's role simply to amend the boundaries of existing wards or can he vary the number of wards within each district council; and is there any prospect of an increase or decrease in the number of Northern Ireland district councils before the next local government elections?

Dr. Mawhinney: It is for the local government commissioner—under statutes with which he is familiar and according to which he must operate—to hold consultations and then to make recommendations. He makes those recommendations within the legal structures that govern his appointment.

Mr. Bill Walker: When examining the position of local government in Northern Ireland, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the evidence that we on the mainland will also be examining the structure of local government? There may now be a possibility of removing some of the anomalies in this unitary Parliament, in the constitution and in the United Kingdom, and this may be the time to set about making such changes.

Dr. Mawhinney: I hear what my hon. Friends says and I acknowledge his consistent interest in these matters. He will be aware, however, that the structure and powers of local government in Northern Ireland are considerably different from those pertaining in Great Britain. The linkage that I think that my hon. Friend's question implied, therefore, does not necessarily hold.

Mr. McGrady: Does the Minister agree that democracy in local government was dealt a great blow at the city hall in Belfast last week, when members of the minority party were refused the right to speak on substantive matters? Does he accept that the committee system continues to preclude them from participation and does he agree that that puts back the day when reorganisation—if it can be called that—can be contemplated? Does he further agree that any such reorganisation would be part of the ongoing inter-party negotiations that are now in progress under the directorship of the Secretary of State?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to be able to say that I bear no responsibility whatever for the behaviour of Belfast city councillors. I am not entirely sure that the hon. Gentleman is right that certain people were prohibited from speaking, but it may be the case.

If we are to give more power to local authorities, it must be done, as I said, on a basis that is widely acceptable and ensures fair and equitable treatment for all in the local council area. It is clear that that is not the case in all areas of the Province at present. The ability to make progress, as the hon. Gentleman implies, lies very much in the hands of individual councils.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Does the Minister agree that the greatest reform that he could make to local government in Northern Ireland would be the removal of the mouthpieces of the Provisional IRA from our council chambers? Will the Government take steps to ban Sinn Fein from local government?

Dr. Mawhinney: The views represented by Sinn Fein are not views that either the hon. Gentleman or I would wish to endorse in any way, or to be associated with. About 10 per cent. of the electorate of Northern Ireland vote for Sinn Fein candidates. As for the activities relating to Sinn Fein, at least some are in the process of being considered in the Committee stage of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill.

Tourism

3. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any proposals to increase the resources available to the Northern Ireland tourist board for the promotion of tourism in Northern Ireland; and whether he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am pleased to announce that I have recently been able to allocate an extra £120,000 to the Northern Ireland tourist board. Together with the extra £800,000 allocated this financial year, the tourist board will have a budget of £4·72 million—almost £1 million above its original estimate. The board's proposals for increased marketing activity in the coming year are being considered.

Mr. Trimble: I welcome the additional resources for the tourist board. Will the Minister encourage the tourist board unambiguously to promote Northern Ireland and not to shackle itself to the Irish tourist board—Bord Failte—which has declined and obstructed the carrying of Northern Ireland material on its information to such an extent that recently, when the Northern Ireland tourist board tried to place advertisements in Bord Failte material, it cancelled the advertisements, thereby costing the Northern Irish tourist board over £150,000? In the light of that failure to co-operate and that obstructive attitude, will the Minister encourage the Northern Ireland tourist board unambiguously to promote Northern Ireland?

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland tourist board does unambiguously promote tourism in Northern Ireland and I think that it does so rather well. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that if tourists are enticed to the island of Ireland the chances are greater that they will come and enjoy the pleasures and beauties of the north. Therefore, there is a legitimate role of co-operation between the Northern Ireland tourist board and Bord Failte. The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that there is an element of competition between the two boards and I have confidence that the Northern Ireland tourist board will continue to do as the hon. Gentleman asks and unambiguously promote tourism in the Province.

Mr. Couchman: Notwithstanding the opinion of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), will my hon. Friend have discussions with the chairman of the Northern Ireland tourist board to see what areas of co-operation can be established between the two boards?

Dr. Mawhinney: There are elements of co-operation and I am sure that that is something which the chairman of the tourist board keeps under review. What is unquestionably true is that Northern Ireland is one of the most beautiful parts, if the not the most beautiful part, of the United Kingdom and it would be a good start in promoting tourism if we could persuade every hon. Member to visit the Province as a tourist. I have no doubt

that, were they to do so, they would behave as other tourists do in Northern Ireland—they would want to come back and bring others with them.

Mr. Jim Marshall: I agree with the Minister that there is great potential for further development of tourism in the north of Ireland. Does he agree that it can be enhanced by closer co-operation with the Republic, but that it can be diminished by the recent terrorist activity in the centre of Belfast? That will undoubtedly diminish the tourist trade and affect inward investment into the Province which will have consequential effects on unemployment in the coming months.

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Gentleman's point will be echoed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Those activities damage the Province and its people and in that sense, as well as in others, they are to be condemned. However, the overwhelming majority of people who come to Northern Ireland as tourists say, almost in surprise and certainly with delight, that it was not as they expected it to be, that they are pleased they came and were not personally or not much personally affected by the security situation, that they enjoyed themselves and want to come back. That is the basis on which we must continue to build.

Terrorism

4. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the performance of the security forces in the fight against terrorism.

Dr. Mawhinney: The RUC, supported by the armed forces, continues to make progress towards the defeat of terrorism through the even-handed and energetic enforcement of the criminal law. Up to 31 October 1990, 322 people were charged with, and 348 convicted of, terrorist-related offences, including 65 and 28 for murder and attempted murder respectively. In the same period, the security forces recovered 197 weapons, almost 21,000 rounds of ammunition and more than 4,300lb of explosives.

Mr. Ross: Allthough regiments that have an Irish connection do not normally serve in Northern Ireland, is the Minister aware of the intense pride of the people of Northern Ireland that some of those regiments are engaged in a far larger fight against state terrorism in the middle east? We wish our young men and women and all the forces of the United Kingdom well.

Does the Minister understand that we also applaud the efforts and performance of individual members of the security forces in Northern Ireland, but are sadly aware that, despite the high quality of their performance, they have not yet managed to defeat the IRA? As the Minister said that their high performance is all that can be expected of them, where does he think that the failure to defeat the IRA lies, other than at political level? When does he expect his performance to match that of the security forces and lead to the defeat of those elements?

Dr. Mawhinney: The whole House will want to associate itself with the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks. On this day in particular, it is appropriate to recognise the skill, courage and professionalism of not only our security forces in the Gulf, whom we wish well, but those who serve in Northern Ireland, whom we also wish well. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Government are committed to a rigorous security policy, which sits alongside political, economic and social policies and policies on cross-community contact and community relations, the sum total of which will have the effect that he and I desire.

Rev. Ian Paisley: In recognising that the House, and the people of Northern Ireland especially, owe a great debt to the security forces for their courage and resolution and for the great sacrifices that they have made in Northern Ireland, may I ask the Minister to explain why, when a deputation from my party visited the Chief Constable more than a month ago, he said that he was short of supplies and men? What supplies and men has the Chief Constable requested, and when will his requests go through the usual process to see whether they can be granted?

Dr. Mawhinney: The Police Authority received from the Chief Constable a bid for additional manpower for the RUC. After careful consideration, the authority agreed to support his bid and recently asked the Secretary of State to approve additional manpower for the RUC. The authority's proposals are being carefully considered by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware of the deep concern and anger in my constituency about the fatal shooting at Cullyhanna on the last Sunday of last year? Is he aware that tension is dangerously high as a result of that and other incidents? Will he explain why the Secretary of State refused to initiate a completely independent investigation into that incident and does he realise what damage has been done by that refusal?

Dr. Mawhinney: I recognise the substance of the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question which he has reflected to me privately and on other occasions. I cannot accept, however, the latter part of his question. There have been conflicting reports of what happened. All the circumstances are being fully and independently investigated by senior detectives of the RUC. It would be wrong for me to comment on what happened. The police investigation will establish the facts impartially and objectively and a full report will be made to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. McNamara: Is the Minister aware that, if a report goes to the Director of Public Prosecutions and he decides not to prosecute, the fears of members of the community in Northern Ireland will still exist and will be enhanced when, eventually, many years later, the case goes to a coroner's court, where the people involved can make unsworn statements and cannot be examined on their recollections of what happened? Therefore, is not it necessary to have some form of independent perusal and arrangments to allay public anxiety about what happens on these occasions, and should not the basis of the DPP's decisions be made public, to gain confidence in the administration of the law and the actions of the security forces?

Dr. Mawhinney: The investigation by senior detectives of the RUC will be full and independent. The facts will be determined and a report will be made to the DPP, who, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is an independent officer and is not subject to the decisions of Ministers.

Security

5. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the current security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Since I answered a similar question on 22 November last year, there have been six deaths arising from the security situation in Northern Ireland, including five civilians and one full-time RUC reserve officer. The police and Army continue to make significant finds of arms and ammunition and have in recent weeks made several arrests.

Mr. Brown: I understand that the Government are against linkage. Would not it be a good idea for the Minister to consider withdrawing British troops from Northern Ireland, particularly Scottish troops? Will he consider introducing an amnesty for all paramilitaries, whether Protestant or Catholic, to help the peace process?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman has previously asked me a series of similar questions. I respect his motivation, but I profoundly disagree with those questions and I believe that the majority of hon. Members think likewise.

Rev. Ian Paisley: May I, too, congratulate the Secretary of State on the announcement of his engagement? I am glad that he has been able to carry out his courtship under the eye of the special branch. For how many men has the Chief Constable asked?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes and for his solicitude about circumstances with which he is familiar—I do not, of course, in any way refer to his personal behaviour. As for the second half of his question, the Chief Constable's request to the police authority was for 441 men.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Secretary of State agree that, notwithstanding the great courage of our security forces in Northern Ireland, they cannot do the job unless they are properly resourced in terms of manpower and equipment, any more than the forces in the Gulf can? Does he accept that the closure of vehicle checkpoints during the hours of darkness in my constituency has done much to alienate people on both sides of the community who recognise the need to have those checkpoints? Will he consider placing the checkpoints right on the frontier so that the citizens of Northern Ireland are not closed out at night? If the right hon. Gentleman tells me that that is not possible for security reasons, why can he claim that there is adequate co-operation from the Irish Republic on security measures against terrorism?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman, who is always constructive in his contributions to debates on security policy, knows the background to the closure in December of the six permanent vehicle checkpoints at night in Fermanagh, on my authority and on advice from the Chief Constable and from the General Officer Commanding. When the announcement was made, I said that we recognised the inconvenience that was caused to the local community and that the matter would be reviewed to see what we could do in response. That review is continuing. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having again, in his final observation, contributed to the process.

Mr. McNamara: Will the review consider the whole policy on whether there should be permanent vehicle checkpoints? There is considerable feeling that permanent vehicle checkpoints make readily accessible targets for terrorists and that it is unfair to put our men at risk in that way when it might be more advantageous to have the surprise of unusual vehicle checkpoints, although we accept that PVCPs may always be necessary for heavy traffic in certain places.

Mr. Brooke: It goes without saying, as the hon. Gentleman will recognise, that all aspects of security policy in Northern Ireland will be kept under constant review. The policy to which he referred has now existed for a decade. In the analysis of the policy, one should draw attention to the considerable diminution of fear in the community immediately adjacent to the checkpoints as a result of the policy. However, I repeat that the policy itself is kept under constant review.

Exports (United States)

7. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the value of exports of manufactured goods from Northern Ireland to the United States in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): The value of manufactured goods exported to the United States through Northern Ireland in 1989 was £62·3 million. However, this is likely to be a significant underestimate as it does not take account of Northern Irish goods exported through ports in Great Britain.

Mr. Colvin: May I place on record the House's congratulations to my hon. Friend—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box, especially as, while answering his first question, he is wearing another, absent Minister's hat? Is my hon. Friend aware that the lion's share of exports to the United States is by Short Brothers which, since being taken over by Bombadier, has immensely improved its performance, its productivity and its profitability? Does he acknowledge that the strength of the pound against the dollar, especially as aviation products are priced in dollars, is making it increasingly difficult for Short Brothers to bid successfully for new contracts? What can my hon. Friend do about that?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. My hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, is in the United States at the moment trying to increase exports to that country on behalf of Northern Ireland. Shorts makes sales and purchases in dollars. As a privately owned business, its foreign exchange management is a matter for its directors. Shorts has not sought any assistance from the Government for foreign exchange exposures. I take this opportunity to congratulate Shorts on its major contribution to the economy of Northern Ireland. It is a significant exporter; it has achieved well over £600 million in overseas sales in the past five years, which represents 60 per cent. of its total sales turnover.

Mr. Mallon: May I take this opportunity to welcome the Minister to Northern Ireland and to say that nobody could be more welcome than he is? Will he convey to the Secretary of State our congratulations on his engagement? We shall ensure together that we get him to the church on time.

Will the Minister ensure that similar effort and investment is put into attracting inward investment from the United States, as has happened in the recent past? I hope that we shall all recognise the efforts made by the Minister with responsibility for commerce who, at present, is in the United States trying to obtain business for Northern Ireland. His efforts in that regard should be recorded in the House.

Mr. Hanley: I am most grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments.

I wholly agree that inward investment is extremely important in reducing unemployment and in helping the healthy condition of the Northern Ireland economy. Clearly, activities such as those that I have seen at first hand in the past two weeks can do nothing to help build the Northern Ireland economy or to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Bellingham: I also congratulate my hon. Friend on his new post. He has ideal qualifications: he has a great sense of humour and he is also a very good mimic.

Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the major achievements on the economic front over the past few months has been the growth in self-employment and in small businesses? What percentage of the work force is now employed in that sector? Will my hon. Friend also do everything possible to encourage the excellent work of the Local Enterprise Development Unit over the next few months?

Mr. Hanley: I thank my hon. Friend also for his kind comments. I could not be more willing to serve in Northern Ireland, which is a country full of people of very good humour, contrary to certain opinions. I am enjoying myself there tremendously.

Just over 100,000 people are employed in manufacturing industry at the moment. I shall write to my hon. Friend with the precise figure for which he asked me.

Irish Republic

8. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions his Department has had with the Irish Government about the implications for Ireland of its relations with Europe post-1992 and following the construction of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Brooke: The implications for the Government of the Republic of Ireland of their relations with Europe after 1992 are a matter for them. We and the Irish Government have regular contacts about matters of mutual interest arising from progress towards the single European market in 1992.

Mr. Alton: Does the Secretary of State recognise that the Single European Act and the construction of the channel tunnel pose challenges not only to the island of Ireland, north and south, but to us, in terms of our relations with both the Irish Government and Northern Ireland? They provide an opportunity for enhanced co-operation between north and south and between the British and the Irish. Does the right hon. Gentleman also recognise that, unless we improve our infrastructure—especially by the further electrification of railway lines and the improvement of roads—it will not be possible for the island of Ireland to be anything other than a peripheral, rather than a core, part of Europe?

Mr. Brooke: Our practical co-operation on internal market issues is already good. We are in close touch with the Irish Government about Interreg, a Commission initiative to encourage co-operation in border areas. I understand what the hon. Gentleman says about infrastructure. On both sides of the water, the Government are addressing that—in terms of access to the ports in Northern Ireland, in terms of connections and communications with the south and also in terms of road and rail developments on this side of the water.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Given the importance of the channel tunnel to the whole of the United Kingdom, what steps has the Secretary of State taken to improve the direct routes between Northern Ireland and the channel tunnel, using the shortest sea route between Larne and Stranraer, in the south-west of Scotland?

Mr. Brooke: I understand the hon. Gentleman's interest in the matter. He will know that work is under way on the 15 km of the A8 on the way to Larne to provide a dual carriageway instead of a single carriageway. Matters concerning the road between Stranraer and the M6 are for the Scottish Development Department, but £45 million has been spent on continuing stretches and the question of a bypass round Dumfries is currently being addressed. There is no doubt at all about the importance that the Government attach to the question that the hon. Gentleman raised.

Mr. Hume: Does the Secretary of State agree that, once the channel tunnel is completed, Ireland, north and south, will be the only part of the single market that does not have a land link with the rest of the Community? In effect, it will be the offshore island of the new Europe. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that will intensify the common economic interests of both parts of the island and should therefore lead to intensified co-operation between both Governments on those interests?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman is clearly right about large islands, although the Greek islands would be a close analogy. I have already agreed that practical co-operation in the economic sphere is going forward well. Whether that will have a read-across into the political sphere only time can tell. There is not an automatic read-across. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to the House to listen to Northern Ireland questions.

Mr. Kilfedder: Will the Secretary of State explore with the Dublin Government and other member countries of the EEC the possibility of building a tunnel for the short route between Scotland and Northern Ireland? Such a tunnel would be beneficial to not only Northern Ireland but the Irish Republic.

Mr. Brooke: I am reasonably confident about the current arrangements, but I am always prepared to include on my agenda anything that the hon. Gentleman puts to me, however hypothetical.

Education Order

9. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with the workings of the Northern Ireland Education Order.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Stott: The Minister of State will be aware that the Northern Ireland Education Order was not greeted with universal acclamation in the House or, indeed, in Northern Ireland. Is the Minister sure that he has convinced the teaching profession, the area education boards and, moreover, parents in Northern Ireland that the provisions contained in the order are in the best interests of educating the children of Northern Ireland in Northern Irish schools?

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes. The only exceptions that I might be tempted to make are the leaders of education unions. I have gone some way in convincing them that it is a positive development.

Mr. Beggs: Will the Minister assure the House that his nominated bodies are doing everything possible to ensure that schools in Northern Ireland are prepared for curriculum change? Will schools and colleges which still need capital expenditure to provide science and technology accommodation receive funds to finance it?

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes. First, a considerable programme of in-service training for teachers started in 1989-90 and will continue through next year. There will be days of exceptional school closures and extra resources will be made available to the education and library boards. On the capital aspects of education reform, the hon. Gentleman will know that we have made available an extra £135 million over and above already record levels of expenditure on education and that a sizeable proportion of that sum is being devoted, over a period, to precisely that which he seeks. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I again ask the House to listen to Northern Ireland questions. They are a rare opportunity for Northern Ireland Members to put their questions to Ministers.

Unemployment

10. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest level of unemployment in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

11. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: At 13 December 1990—the latest date for which figures are available—there were 95,570 unemployed claimants in the Province, representing 13·7 per cent. of the work force.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister accept that the scandalously high rate of unemployment is a reflection of the failure of the enterprise culture and the imposition of scandalously high interest rates, which, as the Minister knows, are deliberately designed to produce unemployment? Does he recognise that low unemployment is an important component in resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland? What policies does he intend to introduce to bring about a reduction in unemployment?

Mr. Hanley: I thoroughly agree that a reduction in unemployment is important for bringing greater peace to the community of Northern Ireland. However, the figure of 95,570 which I just announced should be seen in comparison with the peak headline total of 135,000 as recently as September 1986.

Mr. Stevens: In congratulating my hon. Friend on his appointment to the Front Bench, may I ask him what the Government are doing to reduce unemployment in the Province?

Mr. Hanley: The Government are committed to continuing the fight against unemployment and have recently published their new economic development strategy for Northern Ireland called "Competing in the 1990s—The Key to Growth". The overall aim is to remove the obstacles that prevent industry growing and to improve the competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy which will lead to stable long-term jobs.

Rev. Martin Smyth: On behalf of my colleagues I welcome the Minister to the Dispatch Box. Does he think that the upturn in unemployment has been caused most by the high inflation rate, high interest rates, the wrong time and level of entry into the ERM or Sinn Fein's economic campaign against Northern Ireland, through its armed wing, in blowing people out of work at the same time as screaming for more jobs?

Mr. Hanley: The level of unemployment has been disappointing over the last two months, but I should add that the rise has not been as serious in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain where it has been faster. Whatever the reasons, we will be trying to reduce unemployment and to increase employment for the sake of all people in Northern Ireland.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 January.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Butler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital that our troops know that they have the overwhelming support of the House not only in liberating Kuwait but in realising the promise of a newly effective United Nations?

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I believe that his views will be echoed throughout the House. I hope that that strong support will be sustained within and beyond the House in the difficult weeks ahead.

Mr. Kinnock: May I take this opportunity of supporting the feeling expressed by the Prime Minister

earlier today that the current conflict was not wanted by those allied against Iraq and is, therefore, regretted? For the sake of our forces and their families, and for the sake of innocent civilians in Kuwait and in Iraq, people everywhere will hope that success in fulfilling the purposes of the United Nations is achieved as speedily as possible. Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to make it clear that Saddam Hussein can quickly prevent further death and destruction by fully and immediately complying with the United Nations resolutions, by laying down all Iraqi arms and by respecting international law?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman and I am grateful for the way in which he expressed his view. I hope that at an early stage Saddam Hussein will do what he should have done a long time ago —make it clear that he is prepared to leave Kuwait fully, wholly and unconditionally and spare the world the conflict that is at present going on.

Mr. Tredinnick: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the assessment by General Colin Powell of the United States joint chiefs of staff that 80 per cent. of the sorties against Iraq have been effective. Is not that a remarkable achievement and a great credit to the allied forces? Does not the pinpoint bombing that we have seen on the news illustrate that there will not be the civilian casualties in Iraq which some had feared? That is important, because our quarrel is not with the people of Iraq.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Our problem is not with the people of Iraq but with the dictator of Iraq who created the invasion of Kuwait. My hon. Friend is entirely right. I echo what he said about the precision bombing that we have seen thus far. I might add that much of that precision bombing is carried out at low level precisely to avoid civilian casualties, sometimes at risk to our pilots. I think that their bravery deserves acknowledgement.

Mr. Ashdown: We all heard the news of last night's action with deep regret that this war had to be fought. Does the Prime Minister realise that in this House, and I believe in the nation, there is no mood of jingoism for war but a deep determination to see through a job that must be done, to support our forces and to back the United Nations?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. We entered this enterprise with reluctance, but we shall pursue it with persistence until the end.

Mr. Thornton: Will my right hon. Friend accept my warm congratulations on the way in which he made his statement this morning and particularly on the way in which he answered the questions put to him by the press? Does he agree with the commentator on Radio 4 this morning who urged that we should not attempt through the many armchair generals who will commentate on this war to second-guess what the military are doing in Iraq?

The Prime Minister: I think that it is already clear from what we have seen today that the degree of care in the planning by the allied high command has been very successful. I believe that the conduct of those military operations is in very satisfactory military hands.

Q2. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Clelland: Does the Prime Minister recall that many of our hostages, who have now returned from Iraq, spoke of the friendliness and helpfulness of the ordinary Iraqi citizens during their period of entrapment? Will he confirm that this war is against Saddam Hussein and his hencemen, not against ordinary families in Iraq? Does he further agree that ordinary Iraqi nationals, living in this country, many of whom are refugees from the oppression of Saddam Hussein, should not be harassed or held accountable for the actions of the dictator?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. It is entirely true that there are a large number of Iraqi citizens in the United Kingdom who are here precisely because they have been persecuted by Saddam Hussein. I believe that their refuge here will be appreciated and understood by the British people.

I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that we have no quarrel whatsoever with ordinary Iraqi people. As I said a moment ago, it is the dictatorship of Iraq which we are opposing.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Since President Bush this morning said that one of his war aims was to destroy the existing chemical and potential atomic war-making capacity of Iraq, will my right hon. Friend associate the United Kingdom with that war aim? Will he also confirm that, once those installations are destroyed, no British or European company will, in future, assist in their being replaced?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend may know, those installations have been attacked, but thus far we are not entirely sure with what success. I hope that that will become apparent later. Subsequently, I certainly hope that firms will take great care in any dealings they may have with those who may recreate that sort of facility.

General Colin Powell

Q3. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions he has had a meeting with General Colin Powell of the United States joint chiefs of staff; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I met the chairman of the United States joint chiefs of staff on 4 December. British commanders, of course, have been in regular touch with General Powell.

Mr. Dalyell: If General Powell were to be instructed either to accept or to offer a call for a cease fire, would we have to wait until Kuwait was occupied by coalition forces? In the light of my letter of yesterday to him, could the Prime Minister clarify the differences between himself on the one hand and Secretary Cheney and General Powell on the other on the use and legal aspects of nuclear weapons?

The Prime Minister: On the first point, the conflict can cease when it becomes clear beyond doubt that the Iraqis are moving out of Kuwait and we are certain that that is the case. That has been and will continue to be the position.

On the use of nuclear weapons, I think that I made it clear in the debate the other day that we did not envisage the use of nuclear weapons. To the best of our knowledge Iraq does not have a nuclear capacity. Under the non-proliferation treaty, which has been signed by the United States and ourselves, we would not therefore use them.

Mr. Aitken: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the vital ingredients in the success of the military operation so far was General Powell's request, courageously supported on 9 November by President Bush and the British Cabinet, to double the number of troops and aircraft deployed to their present high levels? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate all those responsible on both sides of the Atlantic, from commanders to backroom boys, on this remarkable feat of military logistics and preparedness?

The Prime Minister: I would certainly be most happy to do that. When I was able to visit Dhahran and some of the military establishments a week or so ago, it was astonishing to see the way in which the sheer logistics of obtaining such a dramatic armada of weaponry, in terms of both land and air forces, had been achieved. It has been a remarkable logistical operation.

Dr. Owen: Does the Prime Minister agree that one of the significant achievements of General Powell has been to ensure that this is not just an American dispute with the Iraqi Government—he has also involved the Arab Governments? Should we not all like to pay tribute to the Saudi Arabian Government and the Kuwait Government in exile for agreeing to their aircraft flying into Iraq, in marked distinction to the French?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

The Prime Minister: I certainly believe that it is entirely welcome that there has been a multinational effort in terms of today's attack on Iraq. My understanding is that it was a four-nation attack in the first wave. But, as the right hon. Gentleman may not yet have heard, France joined in the attack at a later stage. I understand that some of her aircraft have suffered damage.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sayeed: Although it is difficult to consider any matter other than the middle east today, will my right hon. Friend bend his mind to the conventional forces in Europe treaty that, just two months ago, seemed to offer so much hope for peace in the world? As all 22 signatories are required to ratify that treaty, does my right hon. Friend believe that that will happen, after the brutal repression in Latvia and Lithuania and the undermining of the treaty's spirit by some elements in the Soviet military?

The Prime Minister: I very much hope that that treaty will be signed. Clearly, there are a number of serious problems that need to be resolved, particularly the Soviet Union's transfer of a large number of tanks from the army to the naval coastal command with the intention of bypassing the treaty—which has the absurd effect of ensuring that the Soviet navy has more tanks than the British Army.

Q5. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winnick: Is not it the case that Saddam Hussein must be held responsible not only for the present war and tragedy, but for the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi soldiers who lost their lives during a totally useless, futile war against Iran? Who is this criminal dictator to lecture us about the loss of innocent lives?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to share the sentiments expressed by the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Peter Emery: Will my right hon. Friend accept the praise of Conservative Members for the way in which he has handled the situation so far? Will he also accept that considerable congratulations should be given to the Leader of the Opposition and to the leader of the SDP both of whom have unified behind the Government? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that those initials are very difficult to remember.

I have been very pleased and heartened—but more importantly, our troops will have been pleased and heartened—to see the uniformity of support given to them by the House.

Q6. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: Following the decision of the Soviet Union earlier today to reject the call of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe for an international conference on the position in the Baltic, the first death in Latvia yesterday, the appearance of militia men with their black berets and President Gorbachev's attempt to extinguish a free press in the Soviet Union, does the Prime Minister agree that, if we are to be even handed in our treatment of human rights abuses and the right of self-determination, it is now time to convene a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the position in the Baltic states? Does he agree with Boris Yeltsin who said that we are at the beginning of a mighty offensive against democracy?

The Prime Minister: As I made clear to the House in Question Time earlier this week, I deeply deplore the actions in Vilnius and I very much regret the reports that a Latvian civilian has been killed by Soviet security guards. We have made our views crystal clear to the Soviet Union. The Soviets can be in no doubt about the way in which we view that and we have also made it clear that the continued health of the European Community will depend on the Soviet Union pursuing a path of reform, not of repression.

Q7. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 17 January.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Couchman: The thoughts and prayers of many of my constituents will be with the sappers from Medway towns serving with our troops in the Gulf. Will my right hon. Friend seek to reassure them in their anxiety that the courage and superb professionalism of all our troops will contribute to a swift and satisfactory outcome to this conflict, which many of us had hoped would never happen?

The Prime Minister: I have no doubt that those qualities will contribute to a successful outcome. However, we should be under no illusions about the scale and potential might of the Iraqi forces and, while I am confident about the success, I cannot yet be confident about the speed of that success, and I think that we should prepare ourselves for that fact.

The Gulf

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement on the start of hostilities in the Gulf in the small hours of this morning.

Aircraft of the multinational force began attacks on military targets in Iraq from around midnight Greenwich mean time. Several hundred aircraft were involved in the action, including a substantial number of RAF aircraft. The action was taken under the authority of United Nations Security Council resolution 678 which authorises use of all necessary means, including force, after 15 January to bring about Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait.

The action was taken after extensive consultation with the principal Governments represented in the multinational force and following direct discussions between President Bush and myself over a period of weeks. It was taken only after exhaustive diplomatic efforts through the UN, the European Community, Arab Governments and others to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw peacefully.

The action is continuing. Attacks have been directed at Iraq's military capability, in particular airfields, aircraft, missile sites, nuclear and chemical facilities and other military targets. Reports so far received suggest that they have been successful. Allied aircraft losses have been low. I regret to inform the House that one RAF Tornado from later raids is reported missing.

The instructions issued to our pilots and those of other forces are to avoid causing civilian casualties so far as possible.

Our aims are clear and limited. They are those set out in the United Nations Security Council resolutions: to get Iraq out of Kuwait—all of Kuwait; to restore the legitimate Government; to re-establish peace and security in the area; and to uphold the authority of the United Nations.

As I explained in the debate in the House of Commons on Tuesday, it is only with the greatest reluctance that we have come to the point of using force as authorised by the Security Council. We did so only after all peaceful means had failed and Saddam Hussein's intransigence left us no other course. We have no quarrel with the people of Iraq. We hope very much for a speedy end to hostilities. That will come about when Saddam Hussein withdraws totally and unconditionally from Kuwait. Our military action will continue until he comes to his senses and does so.

Most of all, our thoughts go to the men and women of our forces and their families who wait anxiously at home. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] They have our wholehearted support and our prayers for a safe return home.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I am grateful to the Prime Minister for his statement.

As the House and the country consider the current conditions in the Gulf region, does the Prime Minister agree that it is relevant and fair to remind ourselves that the first act of warfare which caused the Gulf crisis was taken by Saddam Hussein on 2 August when he invaded Kuwait?

For the reasons that I gave on Tuesday, I had hoped that the combined pressures of blockade, sanctions and military readiness could be employed longer to have maximum effect.

Our forces naturally have our complete support and I join the Prime Minister in his thoughts for the families of the men and women facing danger in the Gulf and in his desire that their loved ones come safe home.

Will the Prime Minister confirm that the war aims of the allied forces in the Gulf are related directly to achieving the fulfilment of the United Nations purposes of upholding and implementing resolution 660 and of restoring international peace and security in the area? Will he take this opportunity to make it clear that the forces pursuing those purposes of the United Nations are guided by the dual aims of maximising the disabling of Iraqi military strength while minimising any harm to civilians?

I recognise that the conflict is but hours old, but will the Prime Minister, even at this stage, reaffirm that, after the conclusion of the conflict, prominence must be given to proceeding as quickly as possible to international activities through the United Nations to resolve the wider problems of justice, peace and stability throughout the region?

I welcome the fact that the Government are making provision for an early debate. Once again, just in the act of doing that we are demonstrating the superiority of democracy over any form of dictatorship.

The Prime Minister: I share the views expressed by the right hon. Gentleman.

I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman's first point. It was the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August which commenced the hostilities. As the House knows, that was conducted without cause and, after the invasion had taken place, repression was conducted without mercy. The aggression was Saddam Hussein's, not ours.

I share the complete support for the forces that the right hon. Gentleman expressed. I can confirm that our aims in the conflict are to uphold the United Nations resolutions —those and no others are the aims for which the British and other forces are fighting in the Gulf.

I also confirm that the instructions that have been given to all the allied pilots are to minimise civilian casualties wherever that is possible, and the targets that they have been instructed to attack are, without exception, military targets or targets of strategic importance.

Finally, the right hon. Gentleman asked for our aims and policy at the conclusion of the conflict. I confirm that we will wish to return, as we have in the past, to the question of a peace conference to deal with the wider problems of Arab-Israel.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does the Prime Minister agree that in the days and weeks ahead, when internal communications in Iraq are likely to be seriously impaired, the work of the BBC's world service is likely to achieve unparalleled importance? Will he check today to ensure that that service is given every opportunity to speak the truth to the people of Iraq?

The Prime Minister: That action is in hand.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): May I say how reassuring it was that the Prime Minister laid out so clearly in his statement the limited aims of the operation?

We cannot, of course, rejoice in any loss of life on whatever side, but will the Prime Minister pass on our congratulations and admiration to our forces for their professionalism, skill and courage? The operations so far have clearly been a considerable success, but does the

Prime Minister agree that we must not underestimate the scale of the task that has still to be carried out or the dangers that are still to be confronted?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely right and I share his views without reservation. Iraq has a substantial number of men under arms. They have sophisticated weapons and, in many cases, they have considerable hardened military experience. There is a great deal yet to be done before the matter is resolved.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the Prime Minister take it from me that all right-thinking people in Northern Ireland are with him in the heavy burden that he is carrying at this particular time? Is he aware that many hundreds of Ulstermen are out in the Gulf, side by side with all the service men from the rest of the United Kingdom who are standing shoulder to shoulder to defeat the aggressor? When the right hon. Gentleman sees Her Majesty the Queen this afternoon, will he invite her to call for a national day of prayer, that we might pray that the war will be over speedily and that Kuwait will be liberated?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right to pay tribute to the young men from Northern Ireland, the vast majority of whom are, I believe, serving with 7 Brigade, and have done so for some time with distinction. I shall be delighted to pass on the hon. Gentleman's kind words to their commanding officer. I shall certainly bear in mind his comments about my meeting with Her Majesty the Queen later today.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Is the Prime Minister aware that he enjoys the total support of Unionist party Members on these Benches today for the action that has, unfortunately, had to be taken in the Gulf? Is he further aware that he also enjoys the support of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, who are well aware that the action that we have been compelled to take in the Gulf is the lesser of the two evils that confronted us in that part of the world? Is the Prime Minister aware that we admire his statement today, because it said remarkably little, and will he follow a similar course of action when making further statements over the period of the hostilities, since least said is soonest mended, and the "need to know" should be paramount in his mind when any statement is being prepared?

The Prime Minister: In all that I say, I shall bear in mind first and foremost the need to guard the security and interests of our troops in the Gulf. That has been, and will continue to be, uppermost in my mind. As to the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks, he and his constituents in Northern Ireland understand the impact of terrorism better than most, and it is against a form of terrorism that our troops are fighting in the Gulf.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): As it is likely that some British service men will be taken prisoner during the hostilities, will my right hon. Friend make it clear on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that we expect any such prisoners to be treated according to international convention—because, in view of the Iraqi regime's appalling record of treating its people, we may feel some nervousness about that. Will my right hon. Friend make it clear that, if the Iraqis do not treat prisoners according to international convention, their leaders will be held responsible after the hostilities?

The Prime Minister: We certainly expect any of our troops who are captured to be treated in the manner that prisoners of war should normally be treated. We made that absolutely clear to Iraq and we also held discussions with the International Red Cross about that matter.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): The Prime Minister referred to aims and said that there would be an end to military operations when Saddam Hussein withdraws from Northern Ireland—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): And so he should.

Mr. Rees: Whatever you say, Mr. Speaker, say nothing. I meant to say, when Saddam Hussein withdraws from Kuwait. Would the same apply if Saddam Hussein is driven out of Kuwait?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows precisely what are our aims under the Security Council resolutions. They are to ensure that Saddam Hussein leaves Kuwait and returns to Iraq, and that a legitimate Government are returned to Kuwait. I assume that we shall conclude the existing conflict when that happens.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that events in the Gulf and, alas, in the Soviet Union, mean that the prospects of an early and substantial peace dividend is now remote?

The Prime Minister: We very much regret what is happening in the Soviet Union and we shall have to continue examining the situation there to see what impact it has on our forces. Thus far, we have very little real information about what is happening in the Baltic states. We are seeking to obtain more, but without that information, it is difficult to make a proper judgment.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Despite the Prime Minister's assertion that he does not believe that Iraq has a nuclear capability and despite the assumption made by some of us yesterday that that was so, there are persistent press reports today that Iraq does have a nuclear capacity. It would obviously be disastrous if nuclear weapons were to be used in the middle east, so will the Prime Minister state categorically that under no circumstances would we use nuclear weapons—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—first, but that we will use every means in our power to deter the Iraqis from using such weapons, including the threat of retaliation?

The Prime Minister: As to whether Iraq has nuclear capacity, it is certainly the case that it is seeking to attain nuclear capacity. It is our information that it does not yet have nuclear capacity and, on that basis, the remarks that I made earlier about the non-proliferation treaty stand.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Reverting to the point made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), is my right hon. Friend aware that this morning the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a most wise and unequivocal message of full support for our troops? Is he further aware that your Chaplain, Mr. Speaker, has arranged for a daily service of intercession at 1 o'clock in St. Margaret's while the crisis continues?

The Prime Minister: I certainly was aware of the remarks of the Archbishop of Canterbury and I welcome them unreservedly. Of course, as the House knows, the Archbishop has considerable military experience himself, being a holder of the military cross.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the Prime Minister tell us, as fully and as honestly as he can, what he knows about the level of Iraqi casualties and will he promise us that, throughout this war, we shall be told honestly about the suffering and killing of Iraqi people?

The Prime Minister: I must repeat what I said earlier. The instructions that have been given to our pilots are to minimise casualties and all the preliminary evidence is that that is the case. I have no clear evidence yet, nor will I be able to get it for some time, as to the level of casualties in Iraq, but to the extent that there may be any, either now or later, there can be no doubt in the hon. Lady's mind, in mine or in anybody else's, where the responsibility for that must lie.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): Will the Prime Minister congratulate our pilots on the enormously skilled implementation of their training in the raid last night? Will he remind those of our citizens who complain about the intrusion of forces training in their daily lives in times of peace that it is this training which gives our forces their leading edge and enables them to go in and win?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a fair and valid point. It is that low flying, which is often such a frustration to people in this country, which is enabling us to minimise civilian casualties in Iraq at present.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I, as someone who has regularly questioned low-flying activities in the Lake District, as have my constituents, ask the Prime Minister to relay to our pilots in the Gulf that they have the support, the hearts and the minds of people throughout the county of Cumbria, and we salute their courage and skill at this important time?

The Prime Minister: I will do so with great pleasure.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to welcome not only the courage displayed by the many people to whom he has already referred, but the exceptional courage which has been shown during the first few hours of this conflict by newsmen in places such as Baghdad and other parts of the middle east and by the many foreign citizens and British workers—many of whom are British Aerospace workers —who have remained in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia to provide the support facilities so badly needed by many different troops?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend makes his own point most eloquently and I agree with it.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is the Prime Minister aware that at a news conference this morning a member of the democratic Iraqi opposition, in emotional tones, talked about the extra suffering that his people would now have to go through, and he blamed the United States for inflicting that suffering—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mahon: He also told the news conference how distressed he was that there was so little feeling for the Iraqi people, who have lived under Saddam Hussein's cruelty for many years, and that the west had helped in that cruelty by allowing Saddam Hussein to buy his weaponry and to have export credits? Will the Prime Minister please—I repeat what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, (Ms. Short) said —tell the House honestly of all the civilian casualties as they happen?

The Prime Minister: I have already responded with all the information that I have about civilian casualties. I hope that the hon. Lady will accept that. As for the gentleman she mentioned, I can only say that that member of the Iraqi opposition might dwell on the matter of those other members of the Iraqi opposition who have been murdered by Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Has my right hon. Friend seen press reports that suggest that the BBC may have given its correspondents instructions to refer not to "our troops" but merely to "British troops", apparently in the interests of impartiality? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if those reports are true, it is deeply depressing that—even in a conflict of this sort—the BBC should be unable to distinguish between good and evil?

The Prime Minister: I believe that what the BBC is doing, in what has already been some remarkable reporting, is trying to keep a proper balance in that reporting—precisely because so much of the world listens to the BBC and because it is important to this country that they continue to do so and to believe what they hear.

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): Was there anything encouraging in the reply that the Iraqi Government made to the Prime Minister's representations about the treatment of any prisoners of war who might fall into their hands?

The Prime Minister: I regret to tell the right hon. Gentleman that we have received no positive response.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our forces have no ambition whatever to topple Saddam Hussein from his position of power in Iraq and that the aim of the conflict is simply to remove his forces from Kuwait?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will know the terms of the United Nations resolutions; I set them out earlier. Those are our aims.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): While our armed forces can be confident that they are fighting in a just and, indeed, noble cause—and while they will enjoy the overwhelming support of the British people—can the Prime Minister tell us what is being done to pierce the walls of silence that separate the Iraqi people from the truth, not only about their position but about the hideous role to which Saddam Hussein has brought them?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is entirely right. This is a just cause and I think that that is accepted by the overwhelming majority of people throughout the world.

We have been trying to penetrate the fog of misunderstanding that exists in Iraq over a period of months, not least by means of broadcasts but also in other

fashions. In a society dominated as Iraq has been for so long, it is terribly difficult to get that message through; I hope, however, that it will be understood very shortly and that the people of Iraq will realise that the way in which they have been led and mistreated by their own dictator in recent years is wholly unacceptable. Let us pray that he is soon gone.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Let me join my right hon. Friend in congratulating those responsible for the extremely courageous reporting that is coming out of Baghdad in particular. It is of great interest and comfort to the families of our troops out there.

As well as pledging total backing for our troops in the Gulf, will my right hon. Friend confirm that total support will be given, not only during but after the conflict, to the wives, children and families of our service men out there?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that firm assurance.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): May I ask the Prime Minister not to allow the fact that the first action of a United Nations operating with the new, full-hearted support that it has found has ended in this dreadful tragedy of war to dissuade him from giving equally strong and full-hearted support to the UN's other proposals to deal with difficulties not only in the Gulf area but elsewhere in the middle east and in the world? Can we count on that?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman will have heard me say in my speech the other day, many people throughout the world will have been very pleased about the growing authority of the United Nations over recent years. That certainly embraces my view. As for Arab-Israel, I made it clear earlier that we would continue to pursue a peace conference once the present conflict was ended.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that, in view of the events of the past 24 hours and the past five and a half months, we should be grateful for the strength and determination of the United States in the cause of freedom?

The Prime Minister: I very strongly agree with my hon. Friend's view. We have 35,000 troops and an enormous amount of aircraft and armour there, but the United States has a far greater amount and is paying a substantial price to ensure freedom in Kuwait.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): May I refer the Prime Minister to the penultimate paragraph of his statement, in which he said that military action will continue until Saddam Hussein withdraws unconditionally from Kuwait? Given that we are now at war and that casualties and disruptions are part and parcel of that, is he really saying that, if Iraq announced at any time its willingness to accept and implement the United Nations resolutions, but rquired a short time to gather people together to leave peacefully, that would not be acceptable?

The Prime Minister: I did not say that that would not be acceptable. I have made it clear that the war cannot end until we know that Saddam Hussein is out of Kuwait or it is clear beyond doubt that he is going to get out of Kuwait. We need to know exactly what he means if such an offer is made, but we would wish to examine it most carefully.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in answer to those of our constituents whose sincere and genuine views lead them towards pacifism or a belief that the continuation of sanctions would be the best way to proceed, it is necessary to say simply that sometimes a better world cannot be hoped for or prayed for but has to be fought for?

The Prime Minister: I do agree with my hon. Friend about that. Many people, for religious and other reasons, have a genuine and mortal hatred of war. I understand that—none of us likes it. For some people, it is a hatred that they are unable to overcome. We must continue to explain to them, to borrow the words of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), that this is a just war by any count.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Did the Prime Minister notice that, in the course of the night, the Secretary-General of the United Nations said that he had not been told that the attack was about to take place? As this is supposed to be a United Nations operation, can the Prime Minister tell the House what role he sees for the Security Council in monitoring the operation? Everybody knows that, when the bloodshed ends, there will be a peace conference that will have to meet all the problems.

On the question of casualties, the right hon. Gentleman must have stayed up through the night watching the bombing of Baghdad as the greatest aerial bombardment in the history of air warfare was launched, which we watched in person on our televisions. Did he not feel that, when the commentator said that it was like a firework display on 4 July while human beings were being killed by that bombardment, such a comment ran contrary to the spirit of what the Prime Minister said about minimising the casualties on both sides?

The Prime Minister: The attacks and military action that the right hon. Gentleman saw through the night were on military establishments for a military purpose to achieve the liberation of Kuwait. It operated under the authority of the United Nations, freely given by the United Nations, and there was no specific need to refer back to the Secretary-General.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I commend my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for the way in which he has conducted himself and for his dignity and restraint, which reflect well on this country? Does he share my concern that most of the news coming out of the Gulf is from nearly 400 United States correspondents, while the reports from British correspondents, including the BBC, are coming from only a handful who are having to pool their reports? We need British news about British service men and women, from British correspondents. Will the Prime Minister please see what can be done about that?

The Prime Minister: We went to some trouble to ensure that there were appropriate visas so that British reporters were able to be in the Gulf area during this conflict. I must tell the House that we are concerned also about the safety of British correspondents there and we have made it perfectly clear that we do not expect them to stay in areas of great danger to themselves.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Will the Prime Minister recognise that, as well as achieving the objective of the United Nations of freeing Kuwait, it is important to

[Mr. John Fraser]

preserve political stability in the area and the advance to freedom in other countries? Will he be ever mindful of the effect of an extended conflict on the stability of countries such as Jordan and other Arab countries? Will he undertake to work for a cessation of hostilities at the earliest possible moment and for the minimisation of casualties?

The Prime Minister: There is no way in which, at the conclusion of the conflict, the status quo ante will immediately reappear. One of the matters that I was able to discuss in my recent visit to the Gulf was precisely what might happen at the end of the conflict. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are already thinking, consulting and liaising with our allies about a proper security structure to ensure that this dreadful conflict does not recur.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the House's admiration of the courage and skill of our pilots knows no bounds and that our thoughts and prayers are with the families of crewmen who are missing and of those who will not return from this conflict?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He expresses sentiments which the whole House will share.

Mr. Tony Banks: As the Prime Minister has reminded us several times that this war is being pursued in the light of United Nations resolutions, when can we expect some briefings and statements from the United Nations rather than from General Powell and President Bush? Does he intend to ask for the reconvening of the Security Council and the Assembly so that there can be broader discussion of what is going on in the Gulf?

The Prime Minister: There is no need to reconvene the United Nations Security Council. The resolutions and the authority are clear. The United Nations is not directly involved in the conflict; its member states are, but under the authority of the United Nations.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the ability of our forces in the Gulf to perform the tasks asked of them depends not only on their courage but on the quality of the equipment with which they are supplied? Will he confirm that the British defence industry has performed unstintingly all the tasks that have been asked of it, and more, in these difficult times? Will he ensure that in future our troops will never be asked to undertake tasks for which they are not supplied with the best equipment available? Is that the policy of his Government?

The Prime Minister: Our troops most certainly have the best equipment available. My hon. Friend would be pleased to know precisely what the troops think about the excellent way in which the Challenger tank is performing in the desert. They have excellent equipment and that equipment is in excellent hands with our troops in the Gulf.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On this more sombre day, when the Prime Minister has expressed his reluctance to have taken military action and his willingness to consider the possibility of Iraq deciding to withdraw from Kuwait, does he accept that it is necessary to have absolute clarity on the war aims of the United Nations coalition? Will he reflect on his answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), in which he said that he assumed that, if the forces physically went into Kuwait, they would stop at the border? If we are to look for Saddam Hussein or for those of influence in Iraq who may be more peacefully minded and prepared to accept an end to the conflict by withdrawing from Kuwait, will he make it clear that it is not part of the war aims of the coalition to invade and occupy Iraq?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear that that is not our aim. Our aim is to enforce the United Nations resolutions. That, and only that, is the aim for which the allied troops are in the Gulf.

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): Will my right hon. Friend accept my commendation to the decision takers of the United Nations force for having taken advantage of the great benefits of the principle of surprise and attacked straight away, which will save the lives of friend and foe alike by bringing this conflict to an earlier conclusion than would otherwise be the case?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has a distinguished war record and a distinguished military record. His commendation will mean more to the commanders than mine, and I will pass it on.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Will the Prime Minister recognise that those of us who oppose going to war at this stage, who are not pacifists but who are simply saying, once again, that it is wrong to go to war until all approaches have been exhausted, are not showing any lack of support for our troops? Of course we want them to have the medical and food supplies that they require. That is not an issue in this conflict.

Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the best thing that we can do for our troops is to bring a speedy end to the conflict—not just to defeat Saddam Hussein in Kuwait but to bring about peace and justice in the middle east? I am extremely disappointed that the Prime Minister's war aims seem to be so limited. We do not think that there will be a satisfactory end to the conflict if it merely ends in the removal of Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

May I further ask the right hon. Gentleman—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] If this is a democracy, if this is part of what we are talking about, if other opinions are to be heard——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Of course this is a democracy, but the hon. Lady must take account of the other Opposition Members who wish to participate.

Mrs. Fyfe: I just want to finish on this point. Is Monday's debate to be yet another Adjournment debate or will the Government make a clear statement of the position?

The Prime Minister: The latter point will be discussed between the usual channels in the usual way and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will make a statement in due course. All of us are seeking peace and justice in the middle east, in Kuwait and beyond, but I fear that, for Iraq and Kuwait, peace and justice require the action that we are taking and the defeat of Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the maintenance of the confidence and morale of our armed forces in the middle east crucially depends on this country's calm, courageous, steadfast leadership, all characteristics which he has exemplified perfectly during the past few days and, indeed, since he took office? Will my right hon. Friend explain to Saddam Hussein that the only way in which a ceasefire can take place is if he withdraws from Kuwait?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He sets out the absolute precondition for a settlement and I agree with him.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Will the Prime Minister accept my regard for the professionalism, training and expertise of all our forces, whom I had the opportunity to meet in the Gulf just before Christmas? They have now been committed to action and I hope that they will come through safely. I shall understand if the right hon. Gentleman has difficulty in answering my next question: what is the current attitude of Jordan and Iran to what is happening?

The Prime Minister: I shall certainly pass the first half of the hon. Gentleman's remarks on to the commander in the middle east. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not respond directly to his second question.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the action of the Governments and armed forces of our country, the United States of America and the Arab allies has been bold and effective, thus lending new and awesome consequence to the implementation of United Nations resolutions, which have been made possible by the new peace of detente between the great powers? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of this worthy enterprise will lead to greatly enhanced peace, freedom and stability not only in the middle east but in the world in general?

The Prime Minister: I certainly hope that the action taken on this occasion will in future deter any aggressor who may feel that he can march into a small adjacent and peaceful country. I think that we all hope that the United Nations action on this occasion will guarantee that no such future conflicts need arise.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): As the military action launched against Iraq last night was in pursuance of United Nations resolution 678 and as the Secretary-General was not consulted before the attack, will the Prime Minister give an undertaking that the Secretary-General will be involved in determining whether the terms of that resolution have been met?

The Prime Minister: As I explained some moments ago, there was no need to consult the Secretary-General because the Security Council had given the necessary authority for the attack to take place.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons why the aerial onslaught has been so professional thus far is that the United States, the United Kingdom and others regularly practise and work together, at all levels up to Ministers? That has made it possible for us to carry out an action that could not otherwise have been conducted. The low-flying exercises that go on throughout the United Kingdom, in which United States pilots, RAF pilots and others are involved, have brought about such an operation. We should be grateful for the good and professional way in which the pilots have conducted themselves now and in the past.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There has been such close consultation in NATO for many years.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I welcome the Prime Minister's message of support to the families of soldiers in the Gulf and the measures taken by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in offering special facilities to obtain information about what is happening. However, will the Prime Minister take this opportunity to confirm that, when there are casualties on our side, after military considerations have been taken into mind, it is the families who are notified first, so that they do not have to hear about such casualties through the media?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises a most important question. It will be our invariable practice to ensure that the families are made aware of any casualties before they are made public. They should hear about them not from a third source but from the Ministry of Defence. That will be our intention.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is not only the RAF pilots who have shown superb skill and bravery in what they have done? They in their turn owe an enormous amount to the ground crews and to the maintenance and repair people, including those from RAF Stafford, who give them such superb back-up.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with that. In my visit to the Gulf, I took the opportunity precisely to meet those back-up crews.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If, God forbid, our forces suffer heavy casualties in this appalling war, it may mean, in terms of the counselling of the families and of the advice given to their loved ones, that the fine people employed by the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association may be overwhelmed by the demand.

What contingency plans have the Government made to call on the professional services of social workers and others employed by social work departments and by social services departments? Do not the tragic events at Lockerbie show the way ahead for the application of professional counselling services for those who have suffered tragic bereavement? What are the Government doing for the provision of such counselling services?

The Prime Minister: The Ministry of Defence will be in close contact with the appropriate services. The hon. Gentleman raises an important point.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): As yet, the promised strike against Israel has not taken place. Will my right hon. Friend say what the allies' reaction would be if such an attack or any other incursion into other neighbouring territories took place?

The Prime Minister: The allies have repeatedly made it clear that they would take a very . . . If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I should prefer to put it a different way. I hope

[The Prime Minister]

very much that there is no attack on Israel. There is no justification for it and, if such an attack were to occur, the allies would be absolutely justified in responding most severely and most swiftly.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the Prime Minister aware that in order to keep Israel out of the war, which would have broken up the Arab aspects of the alliance, the United States gave a commitment to Israel that it would not agree to a peace conference which could have discussed the Palestinian issue and others and could have avoided the war? Is it not clear—*[Interruption.]* History will prove me right. Is it not clear what a malign role Israel plays in the middle eastern tragedy?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is not right. He says that history will prove him right. That sort of history, as Henry Ford said, is bunk.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Will my right hon. Friend and the whole House spare a moment to think of the continuing plight of our three hostages being held in the Lebanon? For the avoidance of doubt, will my right hon. Friend make it clear that the Government have no territorial ambitions in the Gulf and no intention of seeking long-term military bases there?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly content to make that point clear. I would add that in no sense have our hostages in the Lebanon been forgotten. They are of great concern to us and the subject of constant interest and activity on the part of the Foreign Office, which seeks to secure their release. We very much hope that they will be home.

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): May I press the Prime Minister further on the important question whether the Secretary-General of the United Nations will have any part in determining whether the terms of United Nations resolutions 660 and 678 are fully met?

The Prime Minister: The Secretary-General is the servant of the Security Council. The Security Council has made its position clear. The allied forces are operating under the authority given to them.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that what happened last night was a great credit to British and allied planning? Will he confirm that the fact that Scud missiles in Iraq have been knocked out makes it unlikely that the Iraqis will be able to make an attack on Israel and that that means that Saddam Hussein will not be able to divide the allies and split off the Arabs, which is clearly his intention?

The Prime Minister: As I said a moment ago, I very much hope that no such attack takes place. If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I can make no comment on the effectiveness of the attack on the Scud missiles.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Given that so much blood is now to be spilt following the actions of Saddam Hussein and over his desire to gain control of the oil reserves of Kuwait, has the Prime Minister had any discussions with President Bush or King Fahd about some control of the oil markets of the world, to prevent people from profiteering in the current crisis?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): As this is a just war, being fought to carry out United Nations resolutions, does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be welcome if those nations which, for whatever reason, cannot take part in the military action themselves, would now reaffirm their support for what happened last night and give moral and, it is to be hoped, practical support in the way that they consider most appropriate—including financial support?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend's addendum is equally important. I hope that nations that have made no material contribution may reconsider—if they have not yet done so—the possibility of making a financial contribution towards dealing with the difficulties faced not least by the front-line states in the Gulf area, which face such economic disruption as a result of the whole affair.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Is the Prime Minister aware that every one of the news correspondents based in Baghdad and broadcasting throughout the night said that they did not see a single aeroplane—so high were the aeroplanes flying that were dropping the ordnance on the streets of Baghdad? Does he not realise that the concepts of pinpoint bombing, surgical strikes and quick and clean bombing actions are a fantasy of the armchair strategists in their sandpits in the television studios.

In so far as Saddam Hussein is a brutal dictator, does it not follow that his own people are by definition his victims, just as much as the hostages and the people of Kuwait? Does it not give the Prime Minister a moment's pause for thought that those are the very people who, as we speak, are being dragged dead and mutilated out of the rubble of the centre of Baghdad?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may speak for himself, but he speaks for no one else.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I notice that several hon. Members were not previously rising but now are doing so. I shall call only those who have been rising and then we must move on.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Has my right hon. Friend heard that CND has set up a chatline via British Telecom? Does he agree that it would be unlikely to be allowed to do so in Baghdad? Does he further agree that, while people may be certain of their moral superiority, there is room for a certain humility if they remember that the freedoms that they so take for granted have been bought with the lives of successive generations of British and other service men?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own point most eloquently.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Does the Prime Minister accept that, although no one wants this war, now that it has come we must get it over with as speedily as possible and with the minimum loss of life? In that connection, does the Prime Minister consider that UN forces yet have command of the air?

The Prime Minister: It is far too early to make that judgment. From all that one can see and all the evidence that we have, the first 24 hours have been extremely successful from the allied point of view. I must reiterate to the House most passionately that there is a great deal yet to be done before we can be certain how the course of the

conflict will be run. We cannot yet say that there is command of the air. The operation has begun remarkably well and we must hope and pray that it continues equally well.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): The whole House will agree that possibly the bravest people in the conflict are the families who have to stay behind and worry about their loved ones. In areas such as mine, where we have a naval and an Army base, support groups are already being set up. May I have an assurance from my right hon. Friend that he will ensure that people who are isolated, perhaps in areas that do not normally have bases, are given full support during these difficult days? I am sure that the whole House is concerned about those people and the lonely wait they have.

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend says, it is often hard to wait and wonder. The units of the men involved will keep in close touch with people in those circumstances. The Ministry of Defence has made it clear that it expects that to be done on a wide basis and sensitively.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): The Prime Minister has said that we will not use nuclear weapons. However, last night President Bush told the American people that this war would not be another Vietnam and that this time the American military would not fight with one hand tied behind its back. Is not that not a clear indication from the President that the green light has been given to the American military to use tactical nuclear weapons if necessary? As part of his extensive consultations with the President, was the Prime Minister consulted on that matter? Did he agree to give the American military a free hand to use whatever weapons it thinks necessary?

The Prime Minister: There was nothing in President Bush's remarks that remotely approximated to the conclusions that the hon. Gentleman has drawn from them.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Does my right hon. Friend agree that a great contribution has been made by the St. John Ambulance Brigade, the Red Cross and the national health service in making provision for emergency treatment in this country?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the national health service has been remarkably co-operative and has made substantial provision. We all hope that that provision will not be necessary. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health made clear yesterday, to the extent that extra expenditure is required for that purpose, it will be made available.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): In view of the precipitate abandonment of sanctions and the onslaught of this bloody conflict, will the Government learn some lessons? For example, the arms and ammunition used against our service men will have been sold to Iraq by western nations. Indeed, components for the manufacture of arms have been sold from this nation. Will the Government make serious efforts to develop an arms embargo to curtail the wretched trade in arms throughout the rest of the world and make sure that the opportunity for conflicts such as this is limited? Or do the Government intend to put profit before peace?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is ill informed. We have had strict control of arms sales to Iraq for a considerable number of years. As to sanctions and their abandonment, they have not been abandoned, but have been added to by the military force now operating. There was no abandonment. Even if there had been total abandonment, it would not have been precipitated; it would have been inevitable because of the way Saddam Hussein has been behaving.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, the battle having been started, it would be wise and desirable if public discussion on the tactical details and public comment on what is happening were kept to the minimum?

The Prime Minister: It is self-evidently in the interests of a successful outcome to the conflict that we are all responsible about what we say on tactical matters.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Is not it noticeable by the House that the debate has revolved around the fact that we are in the Gulf to support United Nations resolution 678? Is not that resolution the 12th in a line of resolutions going back to 2 August? Therefore, it is appropriate that all the action should be under the United Nations. Can the Prime Minister reaffirm again that we have Saudi Arabian and Kuwaiti airplanes in the sky and nail the lie that this is somehow a British-American operation?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is quite right, and I can certainly confirm that. I would add that we have French aircraft in the skies as well.

Mr. Dennis Canavan: (Falkirk, West): Will the Prime Minister dissociate himself from those euphoric war-mongers who naively imagine that last night's air raids guarantee a quick and conclusive military victory? Does not the US army war college report—until recently a secret document—which concludes that air raids alone will not be able to drive the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait and goes on to predict a long and bloody ground battle, with many casualties on both sides, reinforce the case for calling a halt now to hostilities and starting genuine peace negotiations which have not even been tried yet?

The Prime Minister: I have made it clear twice already this afternoon that there is much more to be done. That must be self-evident to everyone. The whole purpose of the way in which the campaign is being conducted is to minimise civilian casualties. I have also made that clear. What will happen as the conflict continues, it is impossible yet to say. More has to be done. How it will fall out, we cannot yet know. What I am confident about is, first, that our forces will continue to operate with the professionalism that we have seen in the last 24 hours, and, secondly, that we will continue to have in the forefront of our minds the safety and security of our troops and our firm intention to minimise civilian casualties.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Prime Minister accept that the Ulster Unionists and the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland respect his resolute leadership during the Gulf crisis? Will he also accept that the conflict could be helped to an early conclusion if all the nations that up to date have withheld their full support for the United Nations would now come behind it and fully support the troops in the Gulf?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is quite right; I wholeheartedly agree with him.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): The Prime Minister accepted with approval the word "just" to describe the war. Will he explain where the justice is for the Kuwaiti people caught between the violence of Saddam Hussein and allied bombing, fearful that they will be ground into the earth, while the Emir and the royal family are living in safety and luxury?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is mistaken. The Kuwaiti people are actually caught under the oppression of Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Prime Minister recall that, in 1940 and in 1967, the Soviet Union used the preoccupation of the world with events of this kind to send the Red Army into the Baltic states and into Hungary? Is not there a grave danger of history repeating itself? Will the Prime Minister take up as a matter of urgency the invitation given yesterday by Mr. Tamara Ringa of the Latvian Popular Front and the foreign secretary of the Lithuanian Parliament to send observers from Britain to the Parliaments of Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius?

The Prime Minister: As I made clear to the House earlier, we take an extremely serious view, which is well known to the Soviet Union, of the events in Vilnius. We are examining what is happening to determine what else we may be able to do.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): As this American-led war continues—[HON. MEMBERS: "UN war."]—American-led war, to protect American oil interests—and as the number of British casualties arising from it increases, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether he has any plans to requisition private hospitals and to use the royal yacht Britannia as a hospital ship?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman's tasteless intervention overlooks the fact that we have had an American and British-led peace in this country for 40 years —from which he has benefited.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Does the Prime Minister recall that, during the recess, I wrote to him to say that the Iraqi Assembly wanted to send a peace mission to this country to brief Members of all parties? I received no acknowledgement from his office apart from a curt note from his private secretary. Why the rush to war? Why can he not reply on this basic issue? Is not peace important? Is it the case that he is really the puppet of the President of the United States?

The Prime Minister: It is justice that is important in the Gulf region. The hon. Gentleman may have his own views about the nature of the regime; I have mine. I believe that Saddam Hussein and his regime are thoroughly evil. It is entirely right for the United Nations to give the authority that it has and I am delighted that it has the overwhelming support of this country, even though I regret that it does not have the support of the hon. Gentleman as well.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Was this war really necessary in terms of United Nations resolution 678, as sanctions have not been given a full chance to operate?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it was necessary—absolutely, totally and completely necessary. If the hon. Gentleman does not think so, he is in a minority.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): How do the Prime Minister's instruction to British pilots, reported this afternoon, to minimise civilian casualties square with what President George Bush said at 2 am? He said that, unlike Vietnam, American forces in this war

"would not fight with one arm tied behind their backs".

Since that war cost 57,000 American lives and 2 million Vietnamese lives, the right hon. Gentleman should, instead of defending cheap oil, stable monarchies and American strategic interests, call a ceasefire. Before the land war develops and tens or hundreds of thousands of young men and women lose their lives, the right hon. Gentleman should call a ceasefire and bring the troops home.

The Prime Minister: American pilots have had the same operational instructions as British pilots to minimise casualties. Those instructions come from their commander-in-chief, President Bush.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Prime Minister aware that, throughout the United States, western Europe and the entire Arab world, millions of people are opposed to this war? They are appalled that, already, in the first 12 hours of war, more explosives have been dropped on Iraq than were dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. How many deaths do there have to be before the oil interests of the United States and western Europe are satisfied, or is the Prime Minister prepared to go back now to the United Nations to seek an early end to this war and a ceasefire, so that negotiations can take place on all the problems of the region?

The Prime Minister: How much longer would the hon. Gentleman have let the people of Kuwait suffer under the oppression that they have had? How much longer? The Security Council resolutions are entirely clear and we shall prosecute them until they are fully met.

Business of the House

4.34 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 21 JANUARY—Debate on the Gulf.

Motions relating to the membership of the Health and Social Security Committees.

TUESDAY 22 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Export and Investment Guarantees Bill.

Motions relating to the establishment of European Standing Committees.

WEDNESDAY 23 JANUARY—Remaining stages of the Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Bill.

Motions on the Scottish housing support grant orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 24 JANUARY—Debate on economic and monetary union on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 25 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

MONDAY 28 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Ports Bill.

The House will also wish to be aware that, in view of the business we have before us, the Government do not propose to move the Census (Confidentiality) Bill [*Lords*] today. I shall announce the revised arrangements for the debate on another occasion. I am authorised to say that the Chairman of Ways and Means proposes to defer consideration of the opposed private business put down for 7 o'clock today.

[Debate on Wednesday 23 January:
Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order
Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Variation Order
Housing Revenue Account General Fund
Contribution Limits (Scotland) Order
Opposition Prayer (EDM 290).]

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I believe that everyone in the House will welcome the Government's decision to hold another debate on Monday on the serious position in the Gulf. Is the Leader of the House able to give us any more information yet about the nature of that debate? Will he give us an assurance that the Government have not ruled out the possibility of another statement in the House tomorrow so that we can all continue to be properly informed about developments in the Gulf?

Given the explicit threat from Iraq, repeated on more than one occasion, that this war will be waged "elsewhere", is there not an urgent need to review the security arrangements in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster and the House? Can the Leader of the House confirm that there has been an urgent look at security arrangements and that there will soon be proposals to heighten the level of security, not just for Members but for everyone who works in the Palace and all those who visit us daily?

Will the Leader of the House confirm that the revenue support grant orders, which will form part of the several statements to follow, will soon be debated fully by the House so that, although we have statements now, we will have proper time to debate the orders when they are finally made?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Member for the way in which he has approached these matters and his welcome for Monday's debate. The motion for the debate and the speakers are under consideration. I hope that the motion will be tabled on the Order Paper tomorrow.

As to his question about another statement tomorrow, and statements generally, I simply do not know what the position will be tomorrow. In general terms, I hope that it is clear from the decision we took about Monday's debate that we are not only keeping the House fully informed about developments in the Gulf, but are also giving opportunities for full debates. Clearly, I can therefore given the hon. Gentleman the general assurance that he seeks.

I can confirm that there has been an urgent review of security. I know from discussions that I have had with Members from both sides of the House that they are concerned about security. A number of steps are being taken to tighten security arrangements in the present circumstances, and the position will be continuously under review. One such step will be the wearing of passes for everyone within the precincts of the House—that will include Members, except when they are in the Chamber. Similar consultations are under way with regard to the other place.

Orders regarding matters to be raised shortly in further statements will be laid in the normal way. I can confirm that there will be a debate on those orders and I hope that that debate will take place in the reasonably near future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the many questions put to the Prime Minister during the earlier statement, I appeal to hon. Members to confine their questions to the Leader of the House to the business next week and not to raise wider issues.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): My right hon. Friend will know of the wide interest in the House in receiving as much information as possible about the events in the Gulf, next week and beyond. He will be aware of the limited opportunities that Members have to receive information on television. The existing television rooms may be wholly inadequate to accommodate all hon. Members who want to be kept abreast of the news. Has my right hon. Friend any information about additional television facilities to cater for colleagues who want to watch what is going on?

Mr. MacGregor: I know that there has been interest in this matter, and my hon. Friend has already raised it with me. Today and tomorrow Committee Room 13 will be available as an additional television viewing room for Members, and next week this additional facility will be provided in Conference Room J on the lower ground floor secretaries' area.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): May I thank the Leader of the House for saying that there will be regular reports and statements and a debate next week on the Gulf?

As regards the other vital foreign affairs issue, the Baltic states, will the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary be prepared to make statements on that important issue, not least because, answering a private notice question yesterday, he said that one of the reasons for not referring the matter to the Security Council at this stage was that

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there was still a possibility of a conference on security and co-operation in Europe. Now that that has been rejected by the Soviets, may we look forward to a statement on the Baltic states as soon as possible?

Mr. MacGregor: It is clear that there will be considerable pressure on the business of the House in current circumstances, and we must bear that in mind. But the fact that the Foreign Secretary answered a private notice question yesterday was a clear sign that he is anxious to keep the House informed on these issues, and we will have to judge the situation day by day. I shall certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's point in mind.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I should like to thank the Leader of the House for giving me foreknowledge of the fact that he was going to defer today's important debate on the Southampton Rapid Transit Bill. I fully understand his reasons: I know that President Bush and the Prime Minister deserve priority, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will be able to give me adequate warning, through his Department, so that I can instruct everyone again and we can defeat this miserable Bill.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's understanding of today's postponement, which is in the interests of the House. This is primarily a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means, but I shall pass on my hon. Friend's request to ensure that he receives adequate notice of when the Bill will next come to the House.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Will the Leader of the House give serious consideration to Welsh Questions next week? As he knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) passed away and his funeral is to be held on Monday afternoon. Twenty-seven questions have been tabled, 15 of them by Labour Members, 13 of whom intend to attend the funeral in Neath. Would it be possible to change the time of Welsh Questions, following which there is a serious debate? Could Welsh Questions be transferred to another day next week, or could some other arrangement be made, since not only Labour Members but the Minister of State and Tory Members representing Welsh constituencies will attend the funeral?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacGregor: I should like to express my deep regret at the death of the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) and my sincere condolences to his widow and family. I am not sure what is possible within the rules of the House, but I understand why the matter has been raised and I shall look at it straight away.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): May I point out to the Leader of the House, further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), that there is a danger of the continuing deterioration in eastern Europe being overlooked in the Gulf crisis? It is a question not only of the Baltic states but of the threatened disruption of Yugoslavia, and the continuing difficulties of Romania and Bulgaria. May we before too long have a debate on eastern Europe so that these important matters can be discussed?

Mr. MacGregor: We are all extremely conscious of the seriousness of all these matters—it is merely a question of when we debate them. I shall bear my hon. Friend's point in mind.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Would the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement on the Government's contingency plans for conscription, and ask him to clear up the rumour that the Ministry of Defence has placed an order with the Glasgow firm Collins to provide 2 million conscription applications and ration books?

Mr. MacGregor: If the hon. Gentleman looks at *Hansard*, he will find that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was clear on this point on Tuesday.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): Would it be possible to broaden the housing debate next week to include two subjects causing great concern in Croydon? The first is the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation by the council, and the second the position of the homeless. The problem is that bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Croydon is costing the community charge payer vast sums of money; secondly, as a result of the legislation on homelessness, huge numbers of undeserving cases are jumping the queue into council houses and genuine cases are having to wait. Could these subjects be included?

Mr. MacGregor: I quite understand my hon. Friend's concern and that of many people in Croydon about these matters, but not by the widest stretch of the imagination, in respect of the business of the House for next week, could I extend Croydon to Scotland. I suggest that there may be other ways in which to raise these legitimate matters.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): May I welcome the increased television facilities in the House which the Leader of the House has announced? Many of us feel less informed in this House than are the vast majority of the population who can watch BBC and ITV. Given the extremely good coverage by Cable News Network, would it be possible to have it installed in the House? I ask the right hon. Gentleman to make a special attempt to get it, in the next few days if possible.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall look at the matter that the hon. Lady has raised.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): The Leader of the House will know that many Members on both sides are concerned not only about events in the Baltic states but about the destruction of the growing democratic movements in the so-called former autonomous republics of the Soviet empire. Will he bear in mind the point made by hon. Members on both sides about the need for an early statement or debate, as and when appropriate, on the dissolution and anarchy within the Soviet empire?

Mr. MacGregor: I take note of what my hon. Friend has said. I cannot add to what I said earlier, but his point adds weight to those that others have made.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Has the Leader of the House looked at early-day motion 299, one of the few ever signed by more than half the Members of this House?

[That, in the opinion of this House, paragraph (2) of the third Resolution of this House of 19th July 1983, which

provides that resettlement grants for former Members should not be payable to a person who has attained the age of 65 years before the dissolution of the present or any future Parliament should no longer have effect, and that the following new provision should be made: (a) That the resettlement grant should not be payable, on the dissolution of the present or any future Parliament, to any person who has attained the age of 65 years at the dissolution of the preceeding Parliament; but That (b) regardless of age, a person who has completed a total of 20 years' service as a Member of this House becomes eligible for the grant when it becomes payable under the first paragraph of the third Resolution of 19th July 1983, irrespective of whether that service was continuous, subject to paragraph (3) of the said Resolution.]

When was the last time that happened? What is the right hon. Gentleman's view of the sentiment expressed in that motion?

Mr. MacGregor: I could not have missed early-day motion 299 given the number of signatories to it. The position on the issue raised in it is fairly clear: it has been looked at by the Top Salaries Review Body on more than one occasion and the arrangements that we have are those recommended by thhe TSRB. I do not want to go into detail now, but I do not think it will be possible to debate the matter next week. I have today tabled on the Order Paper notice of the introduction of the Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries Bill, which we shall debate before too long. The resettlement grant issue in early-day motion 299 is, however, quite separate from that Bill—it is a distinct issue. The arrangements in the Bill do not apply to the way in which the resettlement grant is operated. Nevertheless, it may be possible for some hon. Members to raise tangentially on that occasion the issues that concern them in early-day motion 299.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Without detracting in any way from the importance of Monday's debate, will the Leader of the House try to find a date for a debate on famine in Africa where thousands of people are dying today so that we can consider putting the same kind of determination, energy and money into solving that problem that has gone into the Gulf?

Mr. MacGregor: As I said the other day, the Government share the hon. Gentleman's concern about that matter and that is why we had a statement just before the House rose for Christmas. The hon. Gentleman will understand the pressures on the business of the House next week, which means that I cannot promise anything in Government time, but there are other ways in which the subject can be raised when the Government will be happy to respond.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Leader of the House allow an early debate next week on the coal mining industry because of the uncertainty that is hanging over it as a result of the statement made by Mr. Baker, the chief executive of National Power? Long-term waste disposal by British Coal in my constituency necessitates a private Bill in the House and if there is doubt, or if there are to be changes to the mining industry, there could be substantial consequences for my constituents. Such a debate is needed urgently because that Bill is due to start its passage in the other place by the end of this month. We need an early debate on the future of the mining industry.

Mr. MacGregor: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. Clearly, there will be no opportunity to debate the matter next week, but if he wishes to develop the points that he has made today other opportunities are available to him in the House.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Leader of the House extend Monday's debate beyond 10 o'clock so that Mr. Speaker is not put in the invidious position whereby if the same Privy Councillors who have risen on each of the three previous occasions rise on Monday no time will be left for Back Benchers?

Mr. MacGregor: There was a great deal of agreement that last week's arrangements were the right ones, but, as I have already said, the arrangements for Monday's debate are under consideration.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the announcement of motions on Monday on the Health and Social Services Select Committees and on Wednesday on the European Standing Committees, but what was the result of the right hon. Gentleman's self-appointed task during the Christmas recess to consider the question of the Northern Ireland Select Committee? Let democracy be returned to Northern Ireland as well as to Kuwait.

Mr. MacGregor: I have to confine myself to the business for next week. The motion concerning the European Standing Committees is on Tuesday. Those are two urgent matters which it is important that the House resolves quickly.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Why are we to have an early bath tonight with the censoring of the Census (Confidentiality) Bill and the disappearance of private business? If the House had dealt with that business, it would have been able to deal with any emergency in the Gulf.

Mr. MacGregor: It is for the convenience of the House. It is clear that this afternoon's statements will continue for some considerable time and we then have an important debate on the Ibbs report on which we must take the views of the House and that will take up a great deal of today's parliamentary time. Therefore, it was thought to be for the convenience of Members generally to arrange business in this way.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that some aspects of security in this place seem to be working extremely well? Is he aware that as I came through New Palace Yard this morning I was stopped by a policeman who had never seen me before in my 25 years here and found it somewhat incredible that I was a Member of Parliament?

Mr. MacGregor: I had better not comment further on that.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In view of the speed of events in the Gulf, and the predictability of Gulf debates mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), would not it be better if we arranged a daily statement, or one every two days, on the situation in the Gulf so that responsible Ministers

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could come to the Dispatch Box; more Members could ask questions about what is going on and more information could be more readily imparted to hon. Members rather than us hearing the opinions of the same Members?

Mr. MacGregor: No, it is much better to judge when statements or debates should take place as and when the need arises. I should have thought the amount of time that the House has given to the Gulf since we returned from the Christmas recess is a clear measure of our willingness to debate the matter frequently. I agree entirely with the Leader of the Opposition when he said in his opening question to the Prime Minister earlier today that that very fact demonstrates the superiority of democracy.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Does the Leader of the House agree that we are closing down for the weekend when we are at war and would it not be a good idea to have a two-hour debate on Saturday and Sunday? The *Halifax Evening Courier* nightly carries pictures of young men and women, and anxious desperate relatives. Would not they have something to focus on if the House were sitting? These are grave times. Surely to sit for a couple of hours on Saturday and Sunday would be the right thing to do to keep informed those who are so desperately worried about what is happening when there could be an escalation of the fighting and many casualties over the weekend.

Mr. MacGregor: I have already emphasised our commitment to keeping the House fully informed, but on some of the matters to which the hon. Lady refers there are many other ways of giving that infomation. It does not always have to be done through the House. It is much better to judge when the House should deal with such matters as and when the need arises.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is right and proper that statements and debates on the Gulf war take precedence over other business, but I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will impose the 10-minute limit on speeches on Monday.

May I urge the Leader of the House to give serious consideration to an early debate within the next week or so on the recommendations made by the public inquiry into the Piper Alpha tragedy? I should have thought that that report needs to be debated in the near future because of the serious concern felt by all the families of the men and women employed on rigs and production platforms. They deserve nothing less than an early debate in the House of Commons.

Mr. MacGregor: I will bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman says, but we must debate many pressing matters in the coming weeks in addition to the debates which usually take place at this time of year. All that has to be fitted in with the need to report on the Gulf as and when the need arises. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that the business of the House is under heavy pressure and I cannot promise him a debate on that in the near future.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): The motions relating to the European Standing Committees do not appear in today's Order Book nor in the Order Book that I have just obtained from the Table Office. When will those appear and how will they differ from the orders that the House passed before Christmas?

Mr. MacGregor: They have been on the Order Paper. There are not only the orders that I have laid, but there are amendments to them. I have seen them on the Order Paper, but if they are not there today I shall make sure that they are there tomorrow.

Local Government Finance (England)

4.58 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Michael Heseltine): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the local government finance settlement for 1991-92.

On 31 October, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) announced the Government's proposals for next year's finance settlement. As the House will know, since then I announced that the Government are undertaking a fundamental review of the structure and finance of local government. We are looking both at longer-term changes and at changes that we might implement in the short term. My statement today deals with the changes that we can make for next year, but announces first our decisions following consultation on the finance settlement for 1991-92.

I have considered carefully all the representations that we received on the proposed finance settlement from the associations and from individual authorities. My hon. Friends the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary responsible have reported to me on the meetings that they held with a number of authorities.

My predecessor's proposals envisaged that it would be appropriate for local authorities to spend £39 billion in aggregate. That is an increase of 19 per cent. over the corresponding figure for 1990-91—a very substantial increase. It follows an increase of 10 per cent. for this year over last year, and takes account of the fact that local authority spending has grown substantially in the last three years. I am satisfied that £39 billion is fully sufficient for local authorities' services, taking account of all the pressures that local authorities face, as well as the scope for saving and what the country can afford.

I considered the representations that were made about the methodology for calculating standard spending assessments. My right hon. Friend had proposed a number of improvements for 1991-92, and with those improvements in place, I am satisfied with the method for calculating SSAs for 1991-92.

My right hon. Friend proposed that aggregate external finance—that is, central support from grants and from business rates—should be set at £26·05 billion—an increase of 12·8 per cent. on this year's settlement. I considered very carefully the argument for providing a greater level of support from national taxation to reduce the burden on community charge payers generally, but I concluded that in the present circumstances—notably those in the middle east—no further increase can be afforded in the amount of AEF beyond the increase of nearly £3 billion already proposed. So I confirm today that figure for the increase in aggregate external finance.

I am therefore fixing AEF and its distribution on the basis described in the consultation paper that was issued on 31 October. I have placed in the Vote Office, and have sent to local authorities, exemplifications showing the final standard spending assessments and grant entitlements for each authority that will follow from the settlement. The formal reports will be laid before the House shortly and debated in the normal way.

When we moved from rates to the community charge, the Government were concerned to protect many of those whose bills rose significantly as a result of the changes. We therefore introduced some transitional relief to protect those former rate payers, and elderly or disabled people even if they did not pay rates.

My predecessor announced in July improvements to the transitional relief arrangements that would take effect in April. The Government have reviewed the impact of those arrangements, and we have decided that they are no longer adequate for the present circumstances. We intend to replace them from April with a community charge reduction scheme that will reflect the improvements already announced but provide considerably more help.

The new scheme is designed to help those whose bills have increased significantly over what they paid in rates. It will continue to limit increases over rates. This year, the limit is £3 a week. The limit next year will be £2 a week, as previously proposed—but unlike the transitional relief scheme, the new scheme will be based not on notional charges but on actual community charges after allowing for the unwinding of the safety net. Sadly, in many areas local authorities increased their spending by much more than we had provided for in the settlement, and almost all actual charges were higher than those notional charges.

As I shall explain, the new scheme will provide help for many of those in sheltered housing who largely did not qualify for transitional relief. The new scheme will reduce the amount paid in charges by £1·7 billion—of which £1·2 billion is new money—compared with £350 million of transitional relief this year. The number of people receiving help will go up from about 7 million this year to more than 18 million next year, which, as the House will realise, represents more than half of all those liable to pay the community charge.

The House will be aware that many people who lived in sheltered accommodation were ill-served by the old scheme. No matter how many people live in a sheltered housing scheme, in many cases they shared an entitlement to transitional relief as if there were only two people living there. Under my new scheme, most individuals or couples in such accommodation will be able to qualify for a reduction in their own right. Within the new scheme, that will provide about £150 million of help for these people. I know that that change will be warmly welcomed.

I also propose that my new scheme will give more help to people who previously benefited from charitable rate relief. It will require local authorities to take account of charitable relief granted under the General Rate Act 1967 when calculating the assumed rates bill. Among those who will benefit will be clergymen who live in church accommodation and elderly people who live in almshouses or other accommodation provided by a charity. Further details have been sent to local authorities today. Copies of the letter are in the Vote Office.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is making a separate announcement on the wider public expenditure and financing implications of the new scheme.

By adding the new scheme to the increase in AEF announced by my predecessor, the Government will be providing more than £4·25 billion extra support for England alone towards community charges next year than has been given this year. In addition, there is help from community charge benefit, which is paid to about 10 million people and is running at nearly £2 billion this year.

Given the extensive help available from relief and benefits, it is not surprising that the community charge that people actually pay on average is much less than the figures that local authorities have announced as their

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charges. This year, although the headline average charge was £357, the average amount payable was only about £280. Next year, provided that local authorities budget in line with the realistic provision that we have made, it is within their power to ensure that the average amount actually paid is less than £300.

It is of the utmost importance that that additional Government help should go to the benefit of charge payers, not to finance higher spending. In October, my right hon. Friend announced the criteria that he was minded to adopt in using his powers to cap excessive budgets, or excessive increases in budgets between years. I should make it clear to the House and to local authorities that I stand firmly by the intentions that he then announced. Let nobody think that the additional support means that authorities can relax their efforts to control spending.

The finance settlement I have announced and the new community charge reduction scheme reflect the Government's commitment to financing local government. It will now be for local authorities to provide the services that their charge payers want, at a price that their charge payers can afford.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Does the Secretary of State accept that his statement leaves the fundamentals of the poll tax completely unchanged, and ensures that the average poll tax fixed for the coming year will be not the £380 that he and his predecessors specified but well over £400 per person? It is presumably because that is so that his statement has been made so late on a day that has been dominated by momentous events elsewhere.

Does the Secretary of State accept that disappointment at his statement will be felt all the more keenly because of the expectations that he aroused? During the Tory leadership contest, he gave the impression that he would act immediately to relieve local government and poll tax payers alike of the burdens of the poll tax. His statement today shows that, while he may have laboured mightly, when he came to deliver, it turned out to be just a phantom pregnancy.

Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that his statement will come as a special blow to local government? Surely, from the Secretary of State's earlier statements, local government had a right to expect that he would tackle the obvious flaws in calculating standard spending assessments, and the basic inadequacy of the revenue support grant, which unfortunately he has now confirmed will rise by only £183 million, or 1·9 per cent., over the figure for the current year. It is the inadequacy of that figure which lies at the heart of the poll tax catastrophe.

Does the right hon. Gentleman not accept that, when he talks about £3 billion of new money, £2 billion of it comes from business rate payers, and only a tiny proportion from the revenue support grants? That is the battle that he should have fought and won; that is the battle that he has apparently ducked. What can he say to local authorities which are caught between inadequate revenue support grant and the threat of capping, with budgets which are now in deep disarray and which must now inflict deep and damaging cuts in services already stretched to breaking point? Does he recognise that those problems have been made more difficult, from an administrative point of view, by the delay in confirming the level of revenue support grant?

How can he adhere to the ridiculous assumption that 100 per cent. of the poll tax will be collected, when low levels of collection are now widely admitted and alone will add large sums to poll tax bills this year?

The additional money for transitional relief is welcome, notwithstanding the fact that it is a further admission that the poll tax is basically flawed and unworkable. It is the third such scheme to be announced in 15 months and, if the Secretary of State persists in asserting that the original scheme benefited 7 million people, he must not be surprised if we are sceptical about the figures which he produces today.

Welcome though the extent of the scheme may be, does the right hon. Gentleman recognise—and how many of his hon. Friends recognise—that it retains many of the flaws of the original scheme? What use is it to those people who move house, or who live in large households, as both categories are excluded? Why has nothing been done to help student nurses or non-working wives? When it comes to paying for the new scheme, what bad news does the Chancellor have up his sleeve when he makes his statement on the subject?

How does the Secretary of State expect local authorities to cope administratively with the change in the rules, which will require the liability of every potential taxpayer to be recalculated, in the few weeks available to them?

If the statement is disappointing in dealing with short-term issues, it is equally depressing in respect of long-term solutions. Quite contrary to the easy assumptions about getting rid of the poll tax, it is now clear that no solution to the problem of poll tax is in sight. If the Secretary of State were Archimedes, he would still be wallowing in his bath.

The truth is that no real relief from the poll tax is on offer, either now or in the future. What we need now is not a community charge reduction scheme but a community charge abolition scheme. If we are to be rescued from the poll tax nightmare, we shall need a Labour Government to do the job.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will realise that the fact that my statement has been delayed is in no way of my making. It is the consequence of the important statement that the Prime Minister made today, and I am sure that everyone in the House fully understands that.

The hon. Gentleman has missed the essence and the mood of what we have been saying on this matter, and in a wider context, recently. He knows perfectly well that there are steps one can take in the short term, but that others require legislation and can only be taken in the long term. He would have shown a great deal more confidence in his alternatives to the community charge if he had been prepared to come and talk about them, as opposed to cowering behind the anonymity of his proposals. We have already begun an interesting consultative process with other political parties, which have the courage of their convictions and are prepared to talk about the issue.

It is characteristic of the Labour party that it is prepared to make a lot of noise without any substance whatsoever in what it has to say. Nothing shows more clearly the reality of the hon. Gentleman's position than his dismissal of my announcement today as though it was

of no consequence. The fact that £1·2 billion of extra money was made available to deal with these problems is apparently a matter of no consequence for the Opposition. The whole House, and a wider constituency outside it, will have regard to that profligate attitude to public expenditure from the Opposition.

When he considers the fundamental issue of whether we have been concerned to help or not, the hon. Gentleman should realise that total Government additional support has risen by 12·8 per cent. over the announcements that we have made. It is perfectly true that that figure is a composite of Government support and the unified business rate, but both are within the gift of Government to determine, and it is quite right that they should be regarded as part of a package in the overall settlement.

The standard spending assessments of local authorities are up by 19·4 per cent. for England, so the idea that we have had no regard to the requirements and needs of local authorities simply stands up to no examination whatsoever.

The hon. Member for Dagenham has revealed his own lack of confidence in his proposals and, by his failure to produce any criticisms, proved how right we are in what we have said today.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that there are two more statements after this and that the Secretary of State specifically said in his statement that the formal reports will be laid before the House shortly and will be debatable. I ask Members to ask questions on matters of substance, and not on general matters appertaining to this important issue.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to hear the point before I can rule.

Mr. Douglas: We know that you are under a lot of pressure, Mr. Speaker, but it would be very helpful if you could give us some idea of the time that you are likely to allot to the statements. I do not think that this is an unfair suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: Since the hon. Member has asked me, I imagine that it will be about half an hour each.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): May I assure my right hon. Friend that, irrespective of what the Opposition Front Bench spokesman has just said, his statement will be warmly welcomed by the hard-pressed and the oppressed charge payers of the London borough of Haringey, especially the statement that additional relief will be attached to actual, rather than notional, charge.

However, without wishing to diminish the Government's generosity in making £1·2 billion available, the Government's subvention is not enough. More than anything else, financial discipline is required from the local authorities concerned. Therefore, why has the London borough of Haringey been allowed not to produce its accounts for audit for the past five years, when an Act of Parliament requires it to do so within six months if it is not to act illegally? Why has no action been taken to assert financial discipline upon that local authority and other similar local authorities?

Mr. Heseltine: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. He will realise that the Government's capping powers have protected his borough from the worst ravages of increasing expenditure. However, as he says, in many circumstances that can never be enough to meet the ambitions of some of the charge payers concerned. He raises a most serious matter by drawing our attention to the fact that there is a lacuna in the accounting arrangements. In the Department, we treat that extremely seriously, and my hon. Friend the Minister, the hon. Member for Enfield, South (Mr. Portillo), will be writing to my hon. Friend tomorrow.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the Secretary of State recognise that, now that he has admitted that about 18 million people need some help to pay a flat rate charge, he has shown up the inadequacy of the poll tax as a basic tax for local government? While we welcome some of the changes that he has made, some of which reflect upon him and his predecessors—the changes to help people in sheltered housing schemes and affecting churches, for example—why did he reject the abolition of the 20 per cent. minimum collection, which the Audit Commission has backed within the past few days?

We shall continue to try to persuade the Secretary of State that a local income tax would be much fairer. Will he now admit, however, that the misery of income tax—I mean the misery of poll tax—*[Laughter.]* I can tell hon. Members that the misery of income tax is nowhere near as bad as the misery of poll tax. Will the Secretary of State admit that that misery will be with the people of this country until after the next general election?

Mr. Heseltine: I had the privilege of listening to the hon. Gentleman expound at length on the miseries of local income tax when he came to see me earlier this week: it was one of the helpful parts of the consultation process that is now under way.

Let me answer the hon. Gentleman's question about the 20 per cent. element. It is necessary to make a judgment in such circumstances. Primary legislation would have been required to deal with the matter, which would have taken considerable time, pre-empted the review on which we have embarked and denied the principle of general universality on which the community charge is based. Moreover, it would not, in our view, have addressed the most urgent need—the need to protect those whose payments were affected the most adversely by the community charge proposals. That had arisen because Labour and, sadly, some Liberal authorities had such profligate expenditure patterns.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Given the rumours of a cut in the previously announced figure, my right hon. Friend deserves sincere congratulations not only on producing an increase of over £1,000 million, but on directing it especially towards those whose payments under the old rating system have risen the most—and, of course, those in sheltered housing. Will he redouble his efforts—particularly in the light of today's world news, which obviously overshadows his statement—to make it crystal clear to any local authority contemplating large

[Mr. Robin Squire]

increases that such increases will flow directly from that authority's decisions, and are in no way a result of the generous settlement that he announced today?

Mr. Heseltine: Anyone who studies the figures will realise that there is a political alternative. It is plain that, by and large, on average, Labour authorities charge a great deal more than do Conservative authorities. Under pressure from my hon. Friend, I will make it my business to reveal the political impact of the community charge, depending on which party is in control.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): May I remind the Secretary of State that one reason for that is the fact that it is easier to get a child under pre-school age admitted to a nursery in a Labour authority than it is in any Tory authority in the country? That has to be paid for.

Can the right hon. Gentleman name a single problem or anomaly among those that he claims to have corrected today—or claims that his predecessor corrected—that was not raised during the passage of the Local Government Finance Act 1988? There can be none, because the Government were warned of them all. The Secretary of State knows that; will he admit it?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also tell us how the measures announced today will increase local government accountability, which is supposed to be at the heart of the poll tax? Where is the element of accountability in the maintaining of a flat-rate tax controlled by central Government, irrespective of ability to pay?

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman had followed what I said carefully enough, he would have realised that the new community charge reduction scheme does not affect the difference between this year's charge and next year's. If local authorities increase their charges, that will flow through to the charge payer, maintaining the principle of accountability.

I return to the hon. Gentleman's earlier point about the provision of education justifying increased expenditure in Labour authorities. What the hon. Gentleman must consider is whether the standards of service in inner-city schools and on inner-city housing estates justify the levels of expenditure with which they are often associated.

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): The speech of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) rested on the central platform that there would have to be a recalculation of each person's payment, and that the system was therefore inoperable. Will my right hon. Friend remind Opposition Members that such calculations are undertaken with the use of enormously sophisticated computer software and hardware, and that district councils have already invested in that equipment —which will more than cope, in nanoseconds, with the modest extra calculation that will be needed?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We tried to have regard to local government computer software programmes and to confine the changes that we have made to those likely to have the least effect on, in particular, the costs that will result. It is not always possible to guarantee that 100 per cent., but we have borne it very much in mind.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Is the Secretary of State aware that my constituents need an adequate police force and an adequate fire service, manned to Home Office standards, but cannot have them? Will the money be provided for those standards to be reached? Is he aware that my constituents need nursery schools—and are asking for them—and that they need more home helps and meals on wheels? Judging by the pre-run budget that it has just been given, my local authority will have to impose a massive increase in poll tax, and it still has to find £6 million to pay for cuts made last year and the year before.

Mr. Heseltine: If the standard spending assessment for the hon. Gentleman's local authority has risen by 20 per cent. in a year, that must reflect the fact that the Government anticipate a wider range of services. There is always a limit to the extra money that can be provided within the constraints of public expenditure.

The police authorities are subject to the same rules as other authorities; when their budgets have been fixed, it will be a question of discussing the effect of the capping regimes in the light of those budgets. It is for the police —as it is for every body that provides a public service—to ensure that they are providing value for money within the limits of the cash made available to them. Not all police expenditure is about bobbies on the beat; as the Audit Commission revealed, there are areas of potential economy in many of the services that the police provide, and it is in the interests of good policing as much as in those of the taxpayer for those economies to be pursued.

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): Undoubtedly, the measures announced by my right hon. Friend will be welcomed everywhere by the millions who will gain from them. Let me, however, raise an anomaly which is not merely financial but moral—the position of those who must pay the charge from the wages of their spouses. To my knowledge, those are the only people with no incomes who have to pay 100 per cent. This is not just a question of money; it is a moral issue, especially as our party—and, I trust, the whole House—is pro-family.

I hope that, in the long term, we shall be able to separate local and national finance-raising and local and national powers, and that we can end the continual battle between local and national Government. It is doing nothing for democracy.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend, who is a considerable authority on the subject, will know that the more acute problems will be dealt with by the safety net of the community welfare programmes, which will help couples on lower incomes. Dealing with the principle of payment by the spouse with no individual income, however, would have required the introduction of a relief that could have benefited the spouses of extremely wealthy people. We therefore felt that it was not a priority.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I hesitate to intervene on what seems, on the face of it, to be solely an English debate. The right hon. Gentleman will know, however, that although Northern Ireland retains the rating system, it bears a relationship to the rateable valuation of an area in the north of England. What will be the basis for future local government finance in Northern Ireland, now

that the old basis has disappeared? Can we look forward to a common system of local government finance throughout the United Kingdom in the long term?

Mr. Heseltine: It will come as no surprise to the hon. Gentleman to hear that I am not in a position to answer that question, but I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will attend to it with expedition.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend realise just how dramatic an effect the help that he is providing will have on many people in high-charging Labour authorities, especially in the north, now that charges are to become actual rather than notional? I welcome the fact that the community charge is becoming even less of a flat-rate system.

Does my right hon. Friend accept, however, that many Conservative Members would like his long-term review to reduce bills dramatically—if not by half—through the transfer of the costs of the bulk of education?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will be fully aware that I have heard his views on this subject before, but that in no way discounts the value of his contributions. His suggestion must be seen in the context of the review that we are conducting.

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): The Secretary of State must be aware that it will be widely recognised throughout the country that his announcement is a further vain attempt to buy votes for the Tory party using public money. It appears from his statement that he does not want to buy any votes from Newcastle upon Tyne. Contrary to his final comments, the people of Newcastle will not be able to enjoy the services that charge payers want and are faced with a £12·5 million reduction in budget as a result of his financial regime. That means the closure of homes and schools and cuts in services for which people are crying out. Will he confirm that the assumed personal community charge of £411·52 quoted in his document ignores the £1 million reduction in SSA which the document also announces, and that that means a further £5 increase in the community charge? Will he also confirm that it ignores the increase that will be necessary to allow for non-payment which could take the community charge in Newcastle to as much as £435 with an attendant reduction in services? How can that possibly be fair or even sensible?

Mr. Heseltine: There is always a demand for more services, but there is also a demand for people to pay lower bills to the central or local authority and a balance must be struck. The balance cannot be struck by licensing people not to pay the legitimate bills sent to them. I cannot accept the implication in what the hon. Gentleman said that somehow we must budget to assume that we will not collect the bills.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. Friend accept from one who maintains close liaison with local government throughout the country that the additional £1·2 billion that he announced today will be more than welcome? I am gratified that he has listened to my representations on behalf of those who live in low-rated accommodation, many of whom in my constituency and throughout the north of England will have substantial reductions of £100 or £150 in their community charge bills next year.

While I welcome all that my right hon. Friend has said, may I ask him to do nothing to encourage the profligate Cleveland county council to go on spending money in the way that it does, such as repainting its red fire engines with a new colour? Will my right hon. Friend encourage Cleveland county council to take on board the proposal that I put to it earlier this week—that it engages Sir John Harvey-Jones to do a management audit and save the people of Cleveland the millions of pounds that are being wasted now?

Mr. Heseltine: I know of my hon. Friend's interest and knowledge in the subject and I listened carefully to what he said. I greatly regret the fact that the community charge in Cleveland is £421; its citizens would have been better served if it had been lower. I should be the first to recognise that my hon. Friend is right that the scheme that we have announced today will lead to a significant reduction in the bills of some charge payers. I am thinking of people living in areas where the rateable values and the sums paid under the rates were low, but where there have been significant increases as a result of the change to the community charge. In many cases, such people can expect significant reductions in their bills.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Is the Secretary of State aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) and I are perplexed by his generosity as it affects Lambeth? A year ago the average rate per head in Lambeth was £275. This year, the poll tax, as capped, is £522 per head and next year, under his forecast, it will be £546 per head. Does he realise that we would be twice as well off if we returned to the rates?

Mr. Heseltine: The London borough of Lambeth would be twice as well off it if turned itself into a Conservative-controlled authority.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and welcome much of what he had to say. I shall go away and read the small print. Is he aware that many local authorities such as mine —Kirklees—are increasing their community charge by huge amounts and blaming it on the Government for lack of funds and grants? Will he please emphasise today to the House and the people outside the increase in money that they are to receive?

Mr. Heseltine: I know that my hon. Friend will join me and my colleagues in putting over that important case. The SSAs of Kirklees have been increased by 19 per cent. during the year which is a dramatic increase. It shows that there is an ability to provide an attractive range of services at the sort of figures that the Government have suggested will flow from the community charge. It must be an important part of my responsibility—I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will join me—to make much of the fact that the Government are now providing some £4 billion more in support of local government and its services than they did last year.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Secretary of State recall that many of his hon. Friends campaigned for the poll tax on the basis that it simplified local government expenditure and made it easier to

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

understand? Does he believe that they were correct? How far do his proposals today make it simpler, and does he accept that the only thing that is simpler for my constituents to understand is the widespread hardship that has been caused, particularly to the married woman who has no income of her own and to young people on low incomes, many of whom are having to move from one set of accommodation to another fairly frequently and need their poll tax registration done regularly and their rebates varied? That is causing a major administrative burden for local authorities.

Mr. Heseltine: If the hon. Gentleman tells many of his constituents that their bills will go down next year, he will find that they understand, even if he does not.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people will welcome the changes made to the transitional relief? In the light of their wish to be able to reach for their calculators to find out how it will affect them, when and how will he make available simple exemplifications? Hereford and Worcester county council is one of the lowest recipients of grant. Is he aware that there is a grievance in respect of the funding of its police authority, which is in the vanguard of obeying Home Office instructions to civilianise and, as a consequence, finds itself penalised on its SSA and therefore further deprived of grant? Will he reconsider that anomaly?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend should know that we will look at all these matters in the context of the budget-setting arrangements that must take place before we can reach reasonable judgments about the questions that he is putting to me. That applies particularly to the capping of authorities. The best that I can do to help my hon. Friend on the first part of his question is to say that, although we cannot produce examples of the consequences of our scheme until we know the budgets that have been set by the local authorities, we can produce examples in hypothetical circumstances from which I am sure my hon. Friend will be able to draw his own conclusions.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that the size of the fire service and police service is set by the Home Office. Is he aware that recently the chief constable of West Yorkshire said that next year there will be 500 fewer bobbies on the beat because of the lack of funds? Given his answer a short time ago about the efficiency of police authorities, is he saying that the chief constable of West Yorkshire is running an inefficient force? Does he still consider this to be a Tory tax?

Mr. Heseltine: I would make no such suggestion to the chief constable of any of the police authorities. However, as I said, police authorities have a responsibility to use their money effectively like all others——

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): On police officers.

Mr. Heseltine: Yes, the hon. Gentleman has made my point. It is incumbent on the authorities to look at their other expenditure to see what economies there can be. When they have set their budgets, all those factors will be taken into account in any discussions that we have.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): I believe that my right hon. Friend's statement today will be read across London with interest and, no doubt when it is digested, it will be approved because of its basic fairness. Will my right hon. Friend take note of the fact that it is essential for local government finance to retain the principles of accountability and that everyone of adult age should pay a share of the cost? When he goes into his wider review, he may find that he will not need to make too many more changes to gain approval from the British public.

Mr. Heseltine: I am tempted to agree with my hon. Friend, but the substance of the advice that I get on this matter is—how can I put it?—confused.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Secretary of State realise that his statement that the scheme will continue to support charges that are higher than they were under the rates is questionable? Charges in parts of London are two or three times as high as the rates. As his party is the party of the family, will he take into account the disruptive effects of the poll tax on family life and get rid of this unjust and unworkable tax?

Mr. Heseltine: I wish that the Labour party would come and talk to me about its ideas for a workable alternative. I am sure that they are as coherent and viable as the Liberal party's. If it can do so, why cannot the Labour party? The essence of the hon. Gentleman's complaint is that the community charge is significantly higher than the rates. I have introduced this scheme precisely to address that issue.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): My right hon. Friend's new community charge reduction scheme will receive a warm welcome from thousands, if not millions, of people who live in low rateable value houses in the north of England. It will help many pensioners as well as other people. Will he join me in condemning my local Labour council, Kirklees, which is failing local residents by trying to levy as high a community charge as possible to score party political points against the Government?

Mr. Heseltine: I am glad that my hon. Friend has seen the virtues of the scheme so clearly and quickly. I strongly commend it. It appears that Kirklees is causing more trouble in the north than even I had realised. I am sure that he will join my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) in launching a formidable attack on it.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I wish to raise several issues about the settlement for St. Helens, but in view of your strictures, Mr. Speaker, I shall concentrate on only one. Is the Secretary of State aware that the regional burns unit at Whiston hospital in St. Helens and Knowsley health authority has been designated to receive casualties from the Gulf? Is he aware that it could cause the social services and housing departments of St. Helens authority —a capped authority—considerable problems if it is required to provide housing for the families of service men who are incarcerated in that hospital? Will he give an undertaking that if such a situation arises he will ensure that the authority's additional costs will be met in full by the Department?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that none of us wants to see the circumstances that he described. He knows full well that if emergencies arise,

they will be dealt with properly and that we shall consider their consequences. It would be wrong to hypothesise such consequences today.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My local authority believes that the all-ages social index gives far too much to profligate authorities such as Blackburn, Burnley and Preston. Nevertheless, my constituents will be delighted that the extra money will go not to spendthrift local authorities such as Lancashire county council, but directly to charge payers, helping especially those in sheltered housing and in previously low-rated authorities. It will apply to the actual charge rather than the notional charge, which took a dickens of a lot of explaining to anybody.

Mr. Heseltine: I congratulate my hon. Friend on moving with the speed of light to the heart of the matter. I hope that she will repeat her comments loudly, clearly and often in Lancashire, because the message will then be widely understood and welcomed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is not there something radically wrong when on 12 successive occasions Ministers have had to come to the House of Commons to announce major changes to the poll tax? Is not there something wrong when the two constituencies that I represent, wholly or in part—Bolsover and North-East Derbyshire—*[Interruption.]* Is not there something wrong when the two local authorities that I represent—Bolsover and North-East Derbyshire—have total revenue support grant of £66 million compared with £188 million for Westminster? If we had the same standard spending assessment as Westminster, calculated on the same basis, we would not have the poll tax and we would be giving people money back.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that Bolsover receives £133 of safety netting. I hope that he explains to his constituents the benefits that the Government have bestowed on them, not in any way as a result of the articulate representations of their Member of Parliament.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I commend my right hon. Friend for listening carefully to all the representations that have been made and for making help available where it is most needed. Many councils resent the carrying over of debts from the current year. I have considerable sympathy for those who cannot pay, who could be helped if councils were given more freedom to arrange methods of payment for them, but I condemn those who will not pay.

Mr. Heseltine: I have joined my hon. Friend many times in condemning members of local authorities or charge payers who refuse to pay. I deplore, without reservation, hon. Members who encourage non-payment, which can only have the effect of increasing the charges of those who keep within the law. I very much support my hon. Friend's comments on that. The debts of the previous period must be collected. If people continue to delay payment, there must never come a time when councils stop pursuing payment.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As the representative of the other half of North-East Derbyshire—the bigger half—may I point out to the Minister that pages 1 to 13 of the document show the standard spending assessment broken down into revenue support, poll tax and the business rate? It would help hon. Members to compare the grants for authorities if the figures were shown as percentages, for which I asked in a parliamentary question on last year's figures. It was produced, but placed in the Library. Could the figures be made readily available, perhaps in *Hansard* or in some document that could be collected from the Letter Board? We could than see that some of the figures that we have been given are not as precise or exact as is suggested.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman was obviously able to obtain the information that he required. I do not know whether other hon. Members wished to obtain the same information, but doubtless he could have made it available to them if they did. As it is apparent that the information is available, we appear to be being as helpful as is necessary in the circumstances. As part of a deal, perhaps the hon. Gentleman could be helpful by paying his poll tax.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but to encourage accountability between different councils, particularly shire county councils, will he urgently—I have twice asked for this in the House and have been assured that it will be produced—publish a table of the full-time equivalent staff of different shire counties to enable us to know which are employing too many staff and, as a result, setting bills that are too high?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes an important point. When I was last in the Department, we had a joint manpower watch report which gave us detailed information. I have not checked on how it is proceeding, but, spurred on by my hon. Friend, I shall do so with dispatch.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Why does not the Secretary of State concede that, with the latest change, the Government have made a complete pig's ear of local authority finance? At successive stages, we warned the Government that that would be so. Were it not for the ghoulish shadow of Finchley lady, I am sure that the Government would abolish the poll tax altogether.

It is nonsense for the right hon. Gentleman to work on calculations that local authorities will achieve 100 per cent. collection. The borough of Newham has managed to achieve about 58 per cent. and hopes to achieve about 75 per cent. Thousands of poor Newham people are being taken through the courts by Newham borough council—people who need pay only 20 per cent.—because the Secretary of State says that debts should be collected. Is he aware of the extreme hardship that the poll tax is causing in inner-city areas of London? Does he feel any shame or place any responsibility on his own head for the misery of people being dragged through the courts in Newham and elsewhere?

Mr. Heseltine: I am tired of being lectured about the problems of the poor by a party that consists of many members who refused to pay the poll tax in the first place. If I may be frank, everyone understands that the poorest people were protected by the changes in the community charge, either by the direct benefit or by the uprating of their benefits. There were difficulties because certain local authorities—usually Labour controlled—set the community charge above the level that the Government had deemed necessary. It was that increase that the poor found difficult to pay.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): May I give credit where credit is due and thank my right hon. Friend for acting to protect 18 million people. Does he agree that, if local authorities—many of which, I am afraid, are Labour controlled—followed his inspiration, they could start by protecting many of our constituents? I have no doubt that many of our constituents still do not fully appreciate that they are suffering at the hands of local authorities. Those local authorities use the Government as an excuse. My right hon. Friend's action today has demonstrated otherwise. As long as local authorities such as mine continue to contribute £5,000 to funding Labour women's conferences in towns, there is no excuse for an excessive community charge.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend gave a classic example of just how profligate local Labour authorities can be in their disregard of those who pay the bills. As the figures in front of me show, by and large Labour authorities cause higher community charges. That unfailing generalisation flows out of their actions. It is fundamentally important that, rather than just clamouring for endless extra expenditure, the Labour party should try to get that deal to their charge payers.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on announcing substantial added funding, which will be widely welcomed by community charge payers in Warwickshire. But—this is an important but—the SSA mechanism continues to be blunt, despite the ingenious ideas from my right hon. Friend's officials. Will he therefore give an undertaking that, where real injustice has been faced by a local authority, additional funding will be made available to it to underwrite that injustice?

Mr. Heseltine: I appreciate the fact that my hon. Friend has given attention to the SSAs. I have today announced the closing of the options for the settlement which we are discussing. I am the first to recognise that all these matters include an element of judgment. If my hon. Friend wishes to continue discussions with us about the SSAs for the following year, of course we will listen with the same care as we did this year.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall have to draw questions to a halt and close the exchanges at 6 o'clock. I ask hon. Members to ask brief questions.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that his welcome statement gives the most benefit to those in the lowest rated properties, including pensioners and those who are disabled and on benefit? Will he have another look at the categories of disabled people to include the most severely disabled who are registered with the Department of Employment?

Mr. Heseltine: I appreciate my hon. Friend's comments. The help which we have given has been targeted as best we can within the confines of the legislation and the powers available to us. Many people in the categories that my hon. Friend defined will be helped, but I should be irresponsible if I were to promise to go further in this settlement.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My right hon. Friend is to be congratulated on the extra money that he makes available. He is entirely right to direct it at those who have had the largest increase in their payments to local government. However, I wish that I could be so congratulatory about his announcement about the SSAs. I understand the difficulty that he faces for the current year. Does he accept, however, that the present formula creates considerable injustices and discrepancies between authorities? It cannot be right that there is a difference of over 25 per cent. in the SSAs for the Hambleton and Ryedale districts in my constituency, yet, by any practical judgment, their needs are precisely the same.

Mr. Heseltine: I know how my hon. Friend feels on this matter. He has talked at length to my colleagues in the Department of the Environment. If I represented his constituents, I should probably argue his case. If he sat in my seat, he would know that the one characteristic of all SSAs is that all local authorities feel that SSAs disadvantage them and they believe that they should be adjusted, usually to give more benefit to the local authority arguing the case.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. Friend's statement will be welcomed by the thousands of people who live in small terraced houses in my constituency and who feel that they were cheated by the previous transitional arrangements. My question concerns the payment of aggregate external finance funding. My right hon. Friend's Department recently produced a scheme to end-load rather than front-load the payment of this money to councils. Although it has been modified, it still has a distinct disadvantage, particularly for those efficient councils that collect their community charge. Will my right hon. Friend look again at that point?

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot look at that matter again in the year to come. I recognise that there has been a change which local authorities will not find as comfortable as they would have liked because the scheme that we introduced for the present year was more generous, to reflect the fact that this was a transitional year. We have now reverted to a more orthodox distribution pattern. Of course, local authorities or my hon. Friend and other colleagues may make representations, and we can look at the matter in the longer term, but I should be irresponsible if I suggested that I can reopen it for the next settlement.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the proposed changes to the standard charges announced by his predecessor will remain? That will end the blatant exploitation of the standard charge system by many local authorities. Will he look again at the de minimis rule for the smaller authorities with regard to charge capping? Many have been among the worst in terms of increasing their expenditure but, because their expenditure is less than £15 million, they are escaping his capping powers.

Mr. Heseltine: I am afraid that I must disappoint my hon. Friend on his latter point about the de minimis rule. I cannot keep open the settlement with which we are now dealing. I am fully aware of this flexibility in the present arrangements, but expenditure by the authorities concerned amounts to only 15 per cent. of total local government expenditure. We decided that we would leave that outside the rigours of the capping regime. Many of the councillors concerned are up for election this year. I hope that those who want to deliver the best value for money

will have a clear regard for those people on whose votes their re-election is determined. I can confirm that the SSA arrangements which we have made will be those that are in place for this settlement.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that his statement does not release local authorities from their duty to restrain their spending and ensure that this year's community charge is collected? In both respects, the local authorities in my constituency have a sound record. Should not my right hon. Friend be congratulated on the way in which he has sensibly targeted the extra money which he obtained for this year, but is he aware from questions asked by several of my hon. Friends that there is ample scope for further reform in the SSA system and in the structure and incidence of the community charge?

Mr. Heseltine: I very much agree with my hon. Friend that there is scope for reform in the system of local government finance. I have never known a period in British history when there was not scope for reform. It exists as much today as in the past. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the duty to collect and the duty to contain expenditure.

I referred to the 18 million people who will receive benefit under the new regime. It is fair to say that a significant number of people will not receive benefit and therefore will have to face any unnecessarily large increases in the community charge that authorities decide to impose. I dare say that those people will decide to react with whatever force they can in the circumstances.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend accept my thanks for the assistance that he has targeted towards those on transitional relief, putting it on a factual basis? Does he accept that there is a continuing feeling among shire districts that the settlement has been skewed against them once more? For example, in Bromsgrove, the settlement reduction this year offsets the reduction in the safety net contribution. The position is made worse for Conservative council candidates by the publication, yet again, of a purely notional figure in annexe B which cannot be achieved.

Mr. Heseltine: In his observations, my hon. Friend may want to take into account the fact that the shire districts have the highest increase in standard spending assessment as a result of these proposals. If one introduces a safety net temporarily and then phases it out, there will be consequences. The alternative is to leave it there and, therefore, to leave in place an anomaly in the system which was never intended.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I am one of the few hon. Members of this House who do not have a GCE in mathematics, so I ask my hon. Friend for help. Can he confirm that my figures are right? Will a couple in Hyndburn, who paid rates of £180 two years ago and have this year paid £630 in community charge, pay next year under the settlement £404 in total, even if the county council does as it has threatened and increases the community charge to £400 a head? If that is so, that is good news and will be welcomed by the people in Hyndburn.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not put my signature to his calculations. However, in using a broad brush, he must be in the right ball-park.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): In briefing himself on the facts of the community charges levied this year, has my right hon. Friend noted that if one strips out the pluses and minuses of the safety net, and the levies and contributions that individuals have paid, which distort the relative community charges between councils, one will find that there is a difference of £107 between the community charge levied by the average Labour council and that levied by the average Conservative council?

Mr. Heseltine: As so often, my hon. Friend is ahead of the field. He seems to be striking a chord that is not far away from the figures that I should expect to hear. It is one of those curiosities that I have in front of me the figure for Conservative counties and districts, and for those with a combination of control, which, after taking away the safety net, is £317 on average. The equivalent figure for Labour is £408.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I welcome the improved community charge scheme which will give assistance to those who live in houses with a low rateable value, especially in areas such as mine in which the district council insists on spending 35 per cent. above its SSA. However, may I raise the problem of people who live in permanent caravans on what are primarily non-residential caravan sites, where it is difficult to calculate the rateable value? Under the present scheme, they do not receive transitional allowance. They are entitled to the allowance by virtue of their income, but the problem is that they live in a primarily non-residential caravan scheme and do not, therefore, receive the transitional allowance.

Mr. Heseltine: Frankly, I do not have the answer to my hon. Friend's question, but I will write to him with the details.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the second time today on which the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has risen at the end. If he has a question, I will call him, although I said that I would bring the questions to an end at 6 pm. I do not know whether he heard me.

Sir Peter Emery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am quite willing to sit to the end and not to rise every time so that others may get in first. I see nothing wrong with that.

Does my right hon. Friend realise that there are few Ministers who could take office and, within seven weeks, get £1·2 billion out of the Treasury? That is a remarkable achievement. How can my right hon. Friend ensure that local authorities will not use the extra benefit—which will go, supposedly, to the poll tax payer—to increase their own spending? That is the great worry and I am not reassured by what my right hon. Friend said that that will not happen.

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's first observations, although I am not sure that they will be welcomed in all parts of the Government. If we think about our announcement today, we realise that the money is going to individuals and is not directed to helping levels of expenditure. For far and away the bulk of authorities,

[Mr. Heseltine]

the levels of expenditure are subject to the capping regimes which will not be affected by the new grants that we have described today.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): If a Labour Secretary of State had made the announcement that the right hon. Gentleman has made this afternoon, which involves gerrymandering poll tax bills to save seats, there would have been an outcry from the press and from the Tory party. The money, which is welcome, should be used to meet need and to protect services.

I hope that the Secretary of State can confirm that total standard spending will be up by only 7·1 per cent.—TSS is crucial for the year-on-year comparison. From where is the new money coming? Is it coming from inside the Department and from cuts elsewhere, in the light of the statement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer a week last Sunday about public expenditure curtailment, or is it coming from other departmental cuts in other budgets? In the statement, it was said that the revenue support grant will remain at 1·9 per cent. up. The statement is not about revenue support; it is a smokescreen for the failure of the poll tax.

I have two simple questions for the Secretary of State. First, would not it be cheaper to bring back the rates rather than to try to compare poll tax bills with the rates and then to find extra money to try to bring them into a comparative position? Secondly, will the right hon. Gentleman explain the scheme announced this afternoon? What is the basis of the new scheme? Will he confirm that his statement about 18 million beneficiaries may turn out to be nonsense, not simply because anyone who moves—the Audit Commission says that 40 per cent. of people in inner-city areas move in any one year—will no longer be entitled to the relief, but because we need to know whether the Secretary of State has invented a new notional poll tax? Is he inventing a new notional figure by which he will compare the old rates with his new figure? Is not it a fact that if authorities exceed that new notional figure—which we have yet to see—individuals will be disqualified from entitlement to the full relief that has been announced today?

Mr. Heseltine: There is no point in trying to argue with the hon. Gentleman about whether we substitute a wholly different system for the community charge this year. He and I know that those options are not within the wildest dreams of parliamentary possibility. The only issue is what we should do about the settlement this year, which we have explained.

The House will have understood clearly what I announced in my new regime. It is clear that people who live in houses that were of low rateable value will take the figures that they paid under the last year of the rates as the base point. They will receive a relief which will limit their maximum payment to £104—£2 a week more. They will then add the difference between this year's community charge and next year's community charge, which will be the maximum that they can pay. In other words, the basis of the relief scheme focuses on the actual level of the community charge in the current year.

Mr. Gould: The notional level.

Mr. Heseltine: No, it focuses on the actual charge this year—not on the charge that will be set—when compared with the last year of the rates as adjusted for the safety net. In that case, one will find that a significant number of people will get a grant to reduce the level of community charge that they pay next year as a consequence of what we have introduced. The best advice that is available to me is that something in the ball-park of 18 million people will be beneficiaries from what I have announced today.

Local Government Finance (Wales)

6.8 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement setting out my decisions on local government finance in Wales for 1991-92.

Before I do so, I want to pay a tribute to the late hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman). He was a long-serving and much-loved Member of the House, and his dedication to his constituency and to the country of Wales generally is well known. For six and a half years he had been Chairman of the Welsh Grand Committee and had presided over most of its sittings. I believe that his wise and firm guidance of that Committee's deliberations played a large part in making its sittings both pleasant and effective. He will be greatly missed, and the House will wish to join me in sending sincere condolences to his widow and children.

As the House is already aware, the Government are undertaking a thorough, constructive and fundamental review of the community charge. In Wales, I have already had a very useful meeting with Welsh local authority associations, and I look forward to further discussions on these matters, including consultations with the Opposition parties in coming weeks. I have also looked at changes which can be made in the next financial year, and my statement today will explain my decisions.

The three reports that set out the final terms of the settlement will be laid before the House next Monday. I have today placed details of the settlement in the Library and I have arranged for essential data to be sent to every local authority in Wales.

The settlement allows for a level of total standard spending by Welsh authorities of £2,433 million—an increase of 14·9 per cent. on last year's figure and an increase of 8 per cent. on the aggregate of Welsh local authority budgets in 1990-91. Aggregate external finance in support of that level of spending will be £1,936·1 million —an increase of 11·2 per cent., or £196 million. Within that, the total of revenue support grant is £1,236·5 million, the distributable amount from the non-domestic rating account is £525 million, and the total of specific grants within the AEF settlement is £174·6 million.

The settlement is an excellent one for Welsh local authorities. The increase in total standard spending means that local authorities in Wales are set to spend on average more than £1,100 for each and every Welsh charge payer in 1991-92 and gives authorities every opportunity to maintain services and to develop them where appropriate. It provides an increase of 8 per cent. on budgets for the current year—which were set too high—which is 2 per cent. ahead of the level of inflation forecast for 1991-92. In addition, efficiency savings, including those identified by the Audit Commission, can release additional resources for service development and can also result in an improved delivery of services. I commend to the House the work of the Assembly of Welsh Counties, the Council of Welsh Districts and individual councils. The work that they have done to achieve the savings and better value for money is to be applauded.

Charge payers will expect their councils to set their budgets and community charges in line with the settlement. They know that expenditure increases that exceed this will mean higher charges than necessary. Similarly, charge payers will expect those councils whose spending falls below their standard spending assessment not to increase their spending by more than the amount for which I have allowed.

I must now explain to the House the implications of the settlement for Welsh charge payers. I am pleased to say that, for two reasons, Welsh charge payers will particularly benefit. First, it is good news for Welsh charge payers, because it means that the community charge for standard spending in 1991-92 will be £228—£4 less than the average charge in Wales in 1990-91. That is eminently achievable and means that, where authorities spend in line with the settlement, 80 per cent. of the cost of local authority services will be met by external finance and only 20 per cent. by Welsh charge payers. However, that figure of 20 per cent. takes no account of reductions in community charges made possible by direct Government assistance to charge payers.

The second reason why this is an excellent settlement for Welsh charge payers is that I am able today to announce a new community charge reduction scheme in Wales and a substantial increase in the sum available for reducing charges. For 1991-92, the amount available will increase from £20 million under the old transitional relief scheme to £62 million under the new scheme. Reductions in charges will benefit directly the residents of specified community areas and will be calculated by reference to the actual community charges set in 1990-91, rather than the notional charges used under the old transitional relief scheme.

The effect of that, together with the substantial additional resources that I am making available, will be significantly to increase the amount of help available to those who received help this year, and also to reduce the charges of the residents of many communities who received no relief this year. In overall terms, I expect the number of charge payers benefiting from reduced charges under the scheme to increase from 750,000 in 1990-91 to 1·4 million in 1991-92. In other words, 67 per cent. of Welsh charge payers, or two in every three, will receive assistance with their charges next year.

The average charge in Wales after the reductions should be about £200, and there is in addition community charge benefit to provide further assistance for those who qualify. When benefits and the new community charge reduction scheme are taken into account, Welsh charge payers should meet no more than 15 per cent. of the cost of local government services—provided always that authorities spend in line with my plans. It is of the greatest importance that this additional help from the Government should go to the benefit of charge payers, and should not be used as a cloak for higher spending.

Let me deal now with non-domestic rates. The rates contribution that Welsh businesses will make towards the cost of local government will be increased by the September retail prices index. I propose to set the multiplier—the Welsh poundage—at 40·8 this year, an increase of 10·9 per cent., as in England. Thus, Welsh businesses should again meet only about 20 per cent. of the cost of local government services in Wales.

My announcement is about revenue spending by Welsh local authorities in 1991-92, but I should inform the House that I also propose to increase the level of support for capital investment by £18 million and I shall announce my proposals on the distribution of these additional resources shortly.

[Mr. David Hunt]

Welsh local authorities are now considering their budgets for 1991-92. I have listened to the representations of the Welsh local authority associations, and have decided not to announce criteria now for community charge capping. But I have also made absolutely clear to every local authority in Wales that, if they budget excessively, they must expect me to act to protect the interests of their charge payers. It is of particular importance that councils do not regard my announcement today as an excuse for additional spending. Welsh charge payers and I will expect authorities to set charges which enable charge payers fully to enjoy the additional assistance that I have announced.

This is an excellent settlement, and charge payers have every reason to expect their councils to set their budgets and community charges in line with it. They should expect to receive community charge bills that reflect the full benefit of the additional resources that I have provided and to pay an average community charge of around £200. I commend the settlement to the House.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): We shall miss the strong and honest voice of the late Donald Coleman. All of us appreciated the sincere remarks of the Secretary of State about our late colleague, who was a magnificent Member of Parliament. Only very recently, he was seen guarding his constituents' interests vigorously and well in the Chamber. Everyone will agree that Donald Coleman loved the town of Neath, its hinterland and its valley. He wished only to make a better life for his constituents, and we were witness to his fine attempts to do that. Neath could have had no better Member of Parliament.

Turning to the community charge reduction scheme —for that is what it is now called—if the unjust poll tax must remain in Wales, I broadly welcome the improvements. Will the new scheme now operate all over Wales? I emphasise that, at present, many communities do not share in transitional relief. For example, will any community in Alyn and Deeside receive benefit from the scheme? At present, no community does. The Secretary of State is merely tinkering. It is only a minor change. The only reform would be abolition.

The Secretary of State made a reference to charge capping. He tries to skirt the issue. Does he intend to apply caps? If so, why does not he announce the criteria? He could confirm now that the English criteria would be used. On the eve of the match, I may as well tell him that he is kicking for touch. Is the right hon. Gentleman asking local authorities to make the choice between cutting services and being capped? Surely he cannot be asking for teacher redundancies. Surely he does not seriously propose any implication of, say, the closure of rural schools.

Can the Secretary of State explain a paradox in his statement? At the beginning, he praised local authorities for their efforts to improve efficiency, yet he finished by accusing them of profligacy and waste. I challenge the right hon. Gentleman to name one local authority in Wales which has acted irresponsibly.

On capital announcements, does the Secretary of State realise that, for the Welsh districts, capital expenditure is an absolute disaster? I put it to him that, compared to the average for the past three years, investment plans for housing are down in real terms by one quarter. The shortfall is £75 million. Consequently, the extra and welcome £18 million of which he boasts must be insufficient, bearing in mind homelessness and the housing crisis throughout Wales.

Will the Secretary of State identify for us in the House tonight the precise cash provided for care in the community? He boasts of extra capital. Is it earmarked for community care? I want to give him a warning. Will not the increase in the business rate above the rate of inflation add to the problems of business in Wales in the increasingly serious recession?

The statement is basically all about the poll tax. When Wales has a new Government, Labour will abolish the poll tax. We say that the poll tax must be abolished. It is unjust and it is despised throughout Wales.

Mr. Hunt: I shall come to the hon. Gentleman's peroration in a moment. First, I am grateful for his broad welcome of the new scheme that I have announced this evening. Secondly, on the coverage of the community charge reduction scheme, 67 per cent. of Welsh charge payers in over 600 communities out of 865 will benefit. In 1991, 35 per cent. of charge payers are covered in 320 communities. I may attract some criticism from behind me now, because I can reveal that, whereas no communities in the hon. Gentleman's constituency of Alyn and Deeside have benefited until now, under the changes that I have announced today, nine of his communities will benefit, and the average reduction in community charge bills will be £24.

Mr.Barry Jones: I thank the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying, "Thank you," so gracefully.

The hon. Gentleman's third point was that the announcement is only a minor change. More than trebling the amount from £20 million to £62 million can hardly be described as a minor change.

The hon. Gentleman's fourth point was that I was kicking for touch. He drew a shady analogy with an important match that will take place on Saturday. I do not expect our side—the great Welsh Rugby Union side—to be kicking for touch on Saturday. It will be kicking for goal and scoring tries. I rest on what I have said already about charge capping.

The hon. Gentleman's next point was that I had accused local authorities of profligacy and waste. If he reads *Hansard* carefully, he will see that I did not use those words. I paid tribute to local authorities in Wales for the enthusiastic way in which they embraced the efficiency initiative and continue to do so. However, I said that I felt that their spending plans this year were too high. I hope that they can contain their spending plans within the limits of what I believe to be a good settlement.

I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman has looked at the overall figures on capital. I announced that assumed growth expenditure would increase to £528 million capital, an increase of £53 million, or 11·2 per cent., over 1990-91. It is a good package, which will enable local authorities to bring forward significant capital investment. It is a total investment of almost £240 per adult in 1991-92, whereas it was £200 in 1990-91 and £156 in England. He really should look at the overall figures.

We have made it clear that we recognise that some are disappointed that we had to delay community care. However, we are preparing actively. In many areas, the

Welsh Office is pioneering with local authorities a great many new initiatives in community care. We are preparing for community care.

The hon. Gentleman's eighth point was about businesses. I merely confirmed the previous provisional announcement. The increase of 10·9 per cent. is exactly the same as the increase in England.

I shall now deal with the hon. Gentleman's peroration. He said that we should abolish the community charge or poll tax. I wish that we could engage in constructive, positive discussions about what should take place under our present review of the community charge. If I recall correctly, the Labour party has come forward with 60 separate schemes to replace the community charge in the past few years. I should like the opportunity to discuss just one with them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call Back-Bench Members, I remind them that there will be a debate on this matter. I ask them to keep their questions reasonably brief.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): I echo the tribute paid to our late colleague, Donald Coleman. It is difficult for any of us to envisage the Welsh Grand Committee without his chairmanship.

In so far as this miserable system can be improved, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for the Environment have gone a long way to improving it. There must be something rather screwy about a system of local government finance in which two thirds of those liable to pay receive some rebate. However, a great many community charge payers in my constituency will live to bless what my right hon. Friends have achieved.

I do not know whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales makes the same deduction as I do from the Labour party's constant half-promises that it will abolish the poll tax. I take that as a clear sign that it has given up all hope of winning the next general election. It knows perfectly well that, if it came to power, it would take a long time to put an alternative system of local government finance in place.

My right hon. Friend was wise not to give any criteria for capping. There is no reason to anticipate that there will be any capping of local authorities in Wales if they continue to respond as they have to the leadership of my right hon. Friend. Does the settlement include any provision for the cost of the Towyn floods and its impact on community charge payers in Colwyn in the next financial year?

Mr. Hunt: I thank my hon. Friend for some of the points which he has made. I certainly intend that the review which we are conducting should be thorough and wide-ranging. As my right hon. Friend has said many times, we are prepared to consider the wide spectrum without preconditions. I also thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about the new scheme. To cover 67 per cent. is a substantial increase, and it will mean that 13 of his communities will benefit, with average relief of £25 per community charge payer.

If I may jump to the point which my hon. Friend made about Towyn, as he knows, I have on several occasions visited the area. We have announced a number of schemes which we believe will be of positive help to the communities there, particularly when we are taking the important step of looking to the longer-term enhancement of security for flood protection and to the revival of the communities. I know my hon. Friend's views. What we have announced is by no means the end of the picture.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): May I add my tribute to those already given to Donald Coleman, the late Member for Neath? He was a man hewn from a rich seam of warmth, kindness, strength and determination, and we shall miss him.

While we must welcome any mitigation of the rigours of the poll tax, is it not right that the reductions referred to in the statement depend upon a bizarre difference of opinion between the Secretary of State and most of the public in Wales? For these reductions to take place, is it not inevitable that local authorities will be forced to close village schools, to hand over public sector retirement homes to the private secctor where they will be less well run, and to put off schemes which would enable those coming into community care to be properly looked after by the social services?

Having said that, I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's offer to consult the other political parties on the review of the poll tax. If he is persuaded that it would be fairer to have in Wales a tax based on ability to pay, like local income tax, which is the only scheme which my party has put forward over a quarter of a century, will we have that scheme in Wales even if his colleague in England does not agree?

Mr. Hunt: Montgomeryshire will get a 15·7 per cent. increase in its standard spending assessment in the settlement announced today. In Powys, the increase is 12·9 per cent. We believe that the increases should be more than enough to accommodate the priorities in any local authority spending plans. In the hon. and learned Gentleman's area of Montgomeryshire, 35 out of 45 communities will receive help under the new scheme, and the average payment will be £14 per recipient.

The hon. and learned Gentleman kindly referred to consultation. I look forward to hearing from him. I am not prepared to say now what my conclusions will be when I have not yet had the welcome opportunity of listening to him.

Mr. Gwilym Jones (Cardiff, North): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, and I note that he estimates that next year's community charge will be as low as £228. My constituents in Cardiff, North have been the hardest hit in Wales by the two local left-wing councils setting community charges of almost £100 more than necessary. Does my right hon. Friend agree that those constituents deserve a reduction because of the way in which they have been treated? Even though he has not yet set the criteria for capping, may I look forward to him being tougher than his predecessor on those councils?

Mr. Hunt: The standard spending assessment for Cardiff will increase by 22·3 per cent. I believe that that is fair. As my hon. Friend will know, in Wales the distribution of the settlement is approved by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. That is a great asset in Wales, and I shall never cease to pay tribute to the local authorities which enabled us to bring it about. Within the overall distribution, Cardiff will get a 22·3 per cent. increase and South Glamorgan will get 13·2

[Mr. Hunt]

per cent. I hope that the new scheme will be welcomed in Cardiff. Under the existing transitional relief scheme, two communities benefit; under the new scheme, 17 communities will benefit, with an average reduction of £41 per person in the next financial year. As to capping, I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): The Secretary of State will be aware of the enormous burden faced by Swansea city council because of the need to demolish and rebuild about 900 PRC houses in Portmead, Blaenymaes and Clase. Given that the fault does not lie with the city council, is wholly unprecedented and will have great repercussions on its budget, will the Secretary of State undertake to consider sympathetically providing additional finance for the city council?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman knows what we have already said about this. Swansea has had a fair allocation of resources. It is for the city council to set its own priorities. I have always said that I look forward to meeting Swansea city council on some occasion; no doubt it will consider what points it wishes to raise with me.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I acknowlege the additional assistance which my right hon. Friend has gained for community charge payers in Wales, but does he agree that it is totally illogical that we should have a different transitional relief system in Wales from that in England? Does he agree that the system in England is fairer because it focuses help on individuals rather than on giving blanket assistance to everyone within a council area?

Mr. Hunt: I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said in his complaints on behalf of his constituents over the application of the transitional relief scheme in Wales. I hope that his constituents will recognise that he has played a part in the way in which I have extended the scheme. Whereas three communities in his constituency benefit this year, that number will rise to 17 in the next financial year, the average reduction being £26.

My hon. Friend has constantly maintained that we should have the English system in Wales. The circumstances are not appropriate for the operation of the English scheme in Wales. The Welsh scheme was introduced after full consultation and with support originally from the local authorities because it is such a simple system. Whereas the English system is very complicated, as I know well, with a substantial amount paid in administration, the Welsh scheme has the beauty of feeding help straight through to the community charge payer with very little administrative cost.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Mon): May I associate myself and my party with the remarks on the late Donald Coleman? We send our condolences to his widow and family. He made a great contribution to the House, to politics in Wales and to the work in his constituency.

The Secretary of State should be made aware that Gwynedd county council takes very little comfort from his statement today, because it has made an assessment that, based on the provisional figures that he has already announced, it will need to increase its poll tax by £40 in the county alone next year in order to maintain a standstill budget. The increase which he has announced is not on the actual budget for this year but on the notional budget that he set for the council.

The problem is that, in order simply to maintain services, the council will have to raise the poll tax by £40. Will the Secretary of State respond to that? Will he also acknowledge that, if the council has to do that, the blame will not lie with Gwynedd or any of the districts but with the Welsh Office?

We also welcome the talks that will lead to the abolition of the poll tax in Wales. Does the right hon. Gentleman have any faith in that tax in the long term?

Mr. Hunt: I did not catch the hon. Gentleman's last question, but I believe that he was asking me to give the conclusions of the review before he and his colleagues have had a chance to see me. I do not believe that that would be right. I look forward to the discussions we shall have of their views on the future of local government finance. I should also welcome any of their comments about local government structure and functions.

I strongly believe that the increase of 8 per cent. over actual budgets—we are not talking about notional budgets—is a good settlement, despite the hon. Gentleman's attempts to throw it into doubt. In England, the increase is almost 1 per cent. lower. My announcement is not only a recognition of the more responsible local government spending that we have had in Wales, but an incentive to all local authorities to spend sensibly and to do so within the settlement I have announced.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has admitted today that the Government have had to rectify the errors they made with the community charge when they got the balance wrong to start with between gainers and losers. Does he intend to improve things further by increasing to 100 per cent. the percentage of community charge payers who will gain? If he did so, he would be unique in the annals of economics for introducing a system in which there were no losers but only gainers.

Mr. Hunt: I do not think that anyone, not even the Labour party, could bring in a system in which all were gainers. We must have a system of local government finance in which the settlement fairly reflects the spending needs of localities and local authorities, while spreading the burden in a proper way. That is why I greatly welcome the signs from the Welsh nationalist party and the Liberal Democrats of their willingness to discuss the future of local government finance. I hope that the hon. Gentleman, with all his influence in his party, will recommend the same course of action.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): In common with other hon. Members, I welcome the fact that the Government are putting more money into local government finance, if only to sweeten the bitter pill of injustice caused by the introduction of the poll tax.

In this year's settlement, the Secretary of State has increased the number of communities that will benefit from the transitional relief scheme. Nevertheless, does he recognise that there are still many disabled people who will suffer unfairly because of the way in which the poll tax operates and because they do not live in those communities that now stand to benefit? I have sent a

detailed letter about this today to the right hon. Gentleman, and I look forward to a brief reply now and a more detailed one later.

Mr. Hunt: I have not yet seen the hon. Gentleman's letter, so I hope that he will allow me to consider it carefully; then perhaps we can have a word about it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) has advocated the English scheme and I recognise that we would then be able to select specific groups of people and individuals for benefit. However, the administrative costs of that would be considerable; that is why we have decided to keep the fundamental basis of the old transitional relief scheme—we are continuing it under the community charge reduction scheme. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that, by more than trebling the amount of benefit, we are giving real relief to Welsh community charge payers for next year. I am grateful for the welcome that that has received from both sides of the House.

Mr. John P. Smith (Vale of Glamorgan): I also pay tribute to Donald Coleman, who was loved and respected not only by his constituents who he represented so well for 25 years, but by the people of Barry in my constituency, which was his home town.

As a result of this afternoon's statement, will the Vale of Glamorgan borough council be able to reverse its decision of last week not to provide planned and much-needed accommodation for homeless families in the area? The number of homeless has doubled while the right hon. Gentleman's Government have been in office.

Mr. Hunt: I recognise and endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about our late colleague.

The Vale of Glamorgan will receive a 17·1 per cent. increase in its SSA, which should be more than enough to cope with all reasonable expenditure damands. The hon. Gentleman will be well aware of the announcements that we have already made for special allocations for the homeless. I recognise that we have a problem, particularly in the city of Cardiff, which requires remedies, many of which we have already announced.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the Secretary of State recognise that the scale of reliefs that he has been forced to announce today is a confession of the hardship that he and his Government have imposed on the Welsh people in the past 12 months? Does he also recognise that calling a budget increase of 2 per cent. over inflation generous fails to recognise the cost structure of local authorities? At best, the right hon. Gentleman has made a standstill announcement, but it is not even that when one considers the problems of homelessness and care in the community. The right hon. Gentleman has also announced that the business rate will increase at double the projected rate of inflation. Surely he appreciates that, at a time when bankruptcies are soaring in Wales, that announcement is the death sentence for many small businesses.

Mr. Hunt: I do not accept that. The announcement—it had already been made on a provisional basis, but I confirmed it today—will not produce that effect. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will reconsider his words. I hope that he will recognise that, given its ingredients, this is a fair settlement.

On occasion, the Labour party has criticised us for failing to increase the revenue support grant under the new system. Today's announcement will mean that the revenue support grant will rise by 2·8 per cent. in real terms between 1990-91 and 1991-92. The right hon. Gentleman played a part in the previous Labour Government, and in their final three years of office there was a reduction of 4 per cent., 8 per cent., and 4 per cent. respectively in rate support grant.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): Does the Secretary of State now accept that the people of Wales are thoroughly fed up with his poll tax, which has operated for the past two years?

The right hon. Gentleman said that he is ruling nothing out and ruling nothing in. Therefore, does he regret the statements of the past 12 months that have poured scorn on the Labour party's fair rating system? Many of his right hon. and hon. Friends believe that that is a proper alternative to his poll tax. If the right hon. Gentleman really wants the Labour party to engage in talks with him about a new local government financial system, he should be aware that we shall do so on the basis of two conditions. First, the poll tax should be abolished and, secondly, a finely worked out rating system, which the Labour party has agreed to, should be the basis for a new local government financial system.

Mr. Hunt: I really wish that the hon. Gentleman would live in the real world. He seeks to set preconditions for consultations that have already been welcomed by the Welsh nationalist party and the Liberal Democrats. I wish that he would follow their approach.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Who brought the poll tax in?

Mr. Hunt: It is no good trying to shout me down. I have already said that I am willing to enter into discussions, and that my precondition is to rule nothing in and to rule nothing out. If that is not a fair basis on which to have a grown-up discussion, I do not know what is. The sooner the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) reconsiders the whole position, the better. When he criticises me for having poured scorn on previous schemes put forward by the Labour party, I hope that he will sympathise with me, because almost every time we had a debate, the Labour party put forward a different scheme. I am still catching up with its last announcement. It would be far better for Labour Members to come to see me without preconditions and get the best possible deal for the people of Wales.

Local Government Finance (Scotland)

6.50 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about Scottish local government finance.

In the context of the additional Government expenditure which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has just announced, I have secured for Scotland the full formula consequential resources. Those amount to £140 million and I propose to make the following increases in expenditure in local government.

First, I shall introduce in Scotland in April, in succession to the transitional relief scheme, a new community charge reduction scheme, payable on a similar basis to that adopted by my right hon. Friend, but allowing for the earlier introduction of the community charge in Scotland from 1989. The new scheme will be effective in Scotland from 1 April 1990. In the calculation of the amounts of relief payable I shall substitute the actual community charge level that was payable in 1989-90 for the assumed charges that have previously applied. That, together with the changes that we have already made to the scheme, will give substantial benefits to many of those who had to face the biggest increase in burdens at the time of the transition from domestic rates. It will cost an estimated further £65 million next year, with more than 1 million charge payers benefiting.

Secondly, I shall increase the contribution I make to reducing business rates in Scotland. The House knows of the very large excess burden that is faced by Scottish businesses and in my recent announcement on business rates I expressed the wish that more could be done this year. Now I am able to say that I can do more. I propose to take a substantial further step immediately by increasing my contribution in 1991-92 from the £58 million just announced to £100 million. That comes on top of the £80 million reduction which I have secured in the current year, and will mean an average 8·6 per cent. reduction in business rate bills below what they otherwise would have been. I shall announce the detailed poundages as soon as possible. I can, however, say that the level of industrial derating will be reduced to 30 per cent.

Thirdly, I propose to use the balance of £33 million to assist capital programmes. In the public expenditure settlement I announced last month, £25 million was transferred from the resources I had available for my block programmes to help with revenue support grant and therefore benefit community charge payers. As a result, local authority capital programmes have been hard pressed. I am glad therefore to be able to strengthen those resources in this announcement. I shall announce details in due course.

The package which I have announced today is a very substantial one and will give considerable benefits to community charge payers, to business ratepayers and to local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Any form of relief is welcome. However, there is an atmosphere of muddle and dither, make and mend, about today's announcement. The impression is that the Secretary of State is being dragged along by his English counterpart and the drive for reform is being fuelled by electoral fear.

I welcome wholeheartedly the decision to base calculations for the community charge reduction scheme on actual poll tax figures in the relevant year. Does the Secretary of State remember that the Opposition have demanded such change month after month, year by year, and met with a prejudiced refusal on the ground that to abandon the make believe of notional figures would be to endorse excessive expenditure? The about-turn is mightily overdue. Why did it take so long?

Will it still be true that almost no one between the ages of 18 and 60 who has not previously been a ratepayer will benefit from the new scheme? Will people who have changed their addresses since 1989-90, and who are disqualified under the transitional relief scheme for that reason, benefit from the new arrangements? Has the Secretary of State discussed the appalling administrative complexities of what is, in effect, mark 3 of the transitional relief scheme with the unfortunate local authorities and does the cost include their administrative charges? As he knows, no applicant can be in receipt of both transitional relief and housing benefit. If someone qualifies for transitional relief, his housing benefit will be reduced accordingly. Will that apply to the new scheme, and, if so, what is the net cost to the scheme after allowing for savings from housing benefit?

Does the Secretary of State understand that there is a healthy and understandable cynicism about his claim that the new scheme is worth an additional £65 million? Does he remember his predecessor's proud boast that transitional relief for 1989-90 would be worth £30 million to the poll tax payer when, at the end of the day, only £10 million was dispersed?

Did not the Secretary of State consider taking the recipients of income support out of the poll tax system? They are, after all, the most financially vulnerable groups in our community. At a cost of just over £40 million, the Secretary of State could have abolished many of the administrative problems that have bedevilled the scheme.

I am astonished by the speed of the Secretary of State's retreat on the business rates. Only on Tuesday he announced a £58 million subvention and now, on Thursday, that is being increased to £100 million. Would it not be good to think that the hard-pressed poll tax payer could look forward to the same speed of response? While the Secretary of State may have got the full formula consequential resources, in England the total sum has gone to help the poll tax payer, but in Scotland it has been split three ways. Will he confirm that if the £140 million had been committed exclusively to the poll tax, individual bills in the coming year would have been reduced, on average, by £40?

I am anything but impressed by the capital programme. Will the Secretary of State confirm for the record that the £33 million to which he referred is borrowing consent, not cash? Is it not true that the total capital allocation in 1990-91 was £457 million—I hope that the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) knew that—and the provisional figure, which is all we have had, for 1991-92, at £468 million, represents a substantial cut in real terms? There is, in effect, a good deal of sleight of hand here, and the truth is that the resources will still be cruelly inadequate.

As all hon. Members know, poll tax payers will face substantial increases next year because of Government policy. Today's desperate juggling with the figures does

not remove the fact that it is an unjust system that ought to go. What is required and what Scotland would like, is a community charge abolition scheme.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) began his comments by referring to muddle and dither. I can only assume that he had in mind the 60 or more different variations that the Labour party advanced for funding local government, culminating in the absurdity of the roof tax. However, I am grateful for the welcome he gave our decision to base the scheme on actual, rather than notional, figures, which will be welcome now, particularly in the context of the anticipated increases being considered by many local authorities. Such increases are unwise and unnecessary, given the generous settlement of 10·4 per cent. announced for next year, when inflation is anticipated to be 6 per cent. or less. Basing the scheme on actual figures will be welcomed by hard-pressed community charge payers, to whom the benefits of the scheme will flow. The elderly and those eligible for qualification above the £104 figure will benefit from the elimination of the difference between the notional and actual levels as a result of the new scheme.

As for discussions with local authorities, the scheme has been announced at short notice. My officials are in touch with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. We are interested in discussing the implications with them and have made it clear that we will pay reasonable administrative costs.

Housing benefit savings are essentially a matter for the Department of Social Security, which I am sure will be able to answer the hon. Gentleman's specific questions.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about the cost estimate. We have the experience of the original transitional relief scheme and the enhanced scheme. Therefore, in estimating an increase in the number of beneficiaries from 550,000 under the enhanced scheme to more than 1 million under this scheme, we are speaking on a more authoritative basis.

Far from our having executed a retreat on business rates, as the hon. Gentleman suggests, I regard what we have done as a major advance. It is the Government who at long last have tackled the problems and unfairnesses faced by businesses in Scotland as a result of the high spending policies of local authorities there under which businesses were chiefly regarded as a milch cow. We have dealt with that problem and stopped the increases taking place. Year by year we are bringing in new resources to bring down the business rate in Scotland to come in line with the uniform business rate south of the border. That will be widely welcomed in Scotland.

As for the quick increase on the figure that I recently announced for business rates, of course the increase has been announced because new resources have been made available. I wonder whether the hon. Member for Garscadden would have given the same priority to businesses. I believe that the three components of this package will be widely welcomed in Scotland and will be of great benefit to community charge payers, local authorities and businesses.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): I am afraid that I cannot congratulate the Secretary of State on his announcement tonight. The people of Scotland will be angry that he has not proposed the abolition of the poll tax. We have suffered it a year longer than have the English and we want it abolished.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Cunninghame district council has been in correspondence with the Scottish Office and drawn its attention to the financial problems that the council faces fixing its poll tax following the successful appeal by a large chemical installation against the level set in the last two property revaluations in Scotland? Will he confirm that Cunninghame district council will be compensated for its loss of income under this announcement? If not, will he be prepared to meet a deputation consisting of my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and me to discuss this matter before a final decision is taken? He refused to do so last time.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman complains about the fact that the community charge has been in force in Scotland for a year longer than south of the border, forgetting that we in Scotland have benefited from the abolition of domestic rates for a year longer too. The transitional relief scheme, the enhanced scheme and this community charge reduction scheme will also benefit Scotland—and from a year earlier than south of the border. The hon. Gentleman also knows that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary with responsibility for local government has agreed to meet him and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) to discuss this matter.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and congratulate him on the support that he has given to Scottish business. Once again, Scotland is not the guinea pig but the trail blazer.

All the political calls for the abolition of what the Opposition call the poll tax but what is really the community charge are a fraud because of their pretence that if it were abolished no one would have to pay anything. It is socialist authorities that squander the most money and it is fraudulent to pretend that abolishing the community charge would mean ordinary people pay nothing.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party is keen on spending money, not so keen on clarifying how it intends to raise it. The Opposition should encourage people to pay the community charge, without which local authorities cannot be effectively funded.

I am grateful for my hon. and learned Friend's remarks supporting the changes for business rate payers. Last year we were able to reduce business rates by 6·25 per cent. and as a result of today's announcement the reduction this year will be another 8·6 per cent. That will be widely welcomed in Scotland and it will benefit the Scottish economy and assist the creation of jobs.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement is welcome as far as it goes? Using the device of transitional relief is fraught with difficulties because the scheme has become so complicated as to be unworkable. It would have been much more satisfactory had he considered delivering some relief in the form of an across-the-board reduction or of the abolition of the 20 per cent. minimum contribution.

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

I am disappointed that the right hon. Gentleman has not dealt with the problem facing local authorities in Scotland as a result of the haemorrhage of finance due to non-payment. In the short term they will find that difficult to cope with.

The business rates announcement is the most welcome part of the package. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will manage to do something to reconcile the big differences that still obtain in rate poundages in Scotland, and that he will find some way of helping small businesses within the relief that he has announced.

Some areas in Scotland have suffered swingeing increases in water rates and charges. I hope that there is scope within this statement to deal with that.

Mr. Lang: Water charges are not covered by these provisions.

I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's welcome for the business rates reductions that I am introducing. They will benefit small businesses as much as large. The result of applying the percentage reduction across the board will be that high-paying local authority areas will pay less in pounds and pence than low-paying ones. I made it clear in my statement early this week that I would welcome further views and opinions on how to develop the scheme in future.

As for the across-the-board reduction for all community charge payers, we could not be sure that it would not seep into higher expenditure by local authorities. The advantage of this scheme is that resources go directly to community charge payers—a major benefit.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My right hon. Friend's statement will be particularly welcome to those who have been on transitional relief, and the new reduction scheme is a good one. The 8·6 per cent. reduction in the business community contribution is also welcome. I also thank him for the positive and constructive way in which he and his colleagues have responded to suggestions on reforming, not abolishing, the community charge. That positive attitude has helped to elicit proposals, including my own, which I hope will be understood one day by those who cannot yet fathom them.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome. Taking into account the previous year during which we restricted the increase in business rates to the rate of inflation, the benefit to Scottish business now amounts to £272 million—a large sum.

I wish that the Labour party would play a more constructive role in the review of the community charge and would help us consider the options so that we can introduce a system that will benefit local authority funding in Scotland and those who contribute to it.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Does the Secretary of State recall that Conservatives used to say that Governments had no money of their own: they just had other people's money? If that is true, are not the hard pressed poll tax payers facing massive increases next year being bribed with their own money? Is it not true that nothing will prevent councils being caught in a pincer movement between cuts in central funding and the non-payment campaign irresponsibly organised by the Scottish National party? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that my council is faced with the prospect of cutting the fire service and being unable to build a new school at a time when charges for local authority services are rising? How does the statement help with that?

Mr. Lang: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman, who, along with the rest of his party, continually urges us to contribute more taxpayers' money to local authority funding and then complains when we do. We are doing it in such a way as to benefit those who pay for local authorities, not those who decide on their spending policies.

I can only agree that it is highly irresponsible of any political party to encourage non-payment. Not only does it lead individuals—usually those least able to defend themselves and look after their interests—into financial difficulty and legal trouble; it undermines local authorities' capacity to deliver local services effectively.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State calm himself a little? For those of us who have been—*[Interruption.]* I wrote to you, Mr. Speaker, in response to the assertion made by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), and you know perfectly well that the assertion that he made and has just repeated is completely false.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear anything.

Mr. Douglas: I know that you did not, Mr. Speaker, but I repeat that that assertion is completely false. I shall try to continue on a serious matter.

Those who have heard the three statements on the poll tax this afternoon will be utterly amazed at the air of unreality that surrounded them. Three Ministers supported the concept of the poll tax and gave the impression that everything was in order when in fact there was almost no support for them among Back Benchers.

Local authority finance is in a parlous state, and the Secretary of State knows it because he has met COSLA. He knows that it is not a case of the Scottish National party organising non-payment. The vast majority of those who are not paying cannot pay, and the reality is that the poll tax should be abolished. The Secretary of State is simply juggling the figures. He is taking money from people on an income-related basis and transferring it to a head tax.

Mr. Speaker: Order. May we have questions, please? This is not a debate.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State face reality and consider abolishing the poll tax and replacing it with a local income tax which is related to ability to pay? That is the only solution to the crisis that is facing local authorities.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman talks about an air of unreality. If he wants to look for an air of unreality, he need look no further than his own party and his party colleagues who seem to think that local authority services can continue to be paid for without members of the public contributing to their cost. That is the height of irresponsibility and the height of unreality. The hon. Gentleman cannot expect to be taken seriously in debates on this matter when he bases his attitude on such postures.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Does the Secretary of State understand that not least among the many

shortcomings of the poll tax is the fact that it has proved to be uncollectable by the methods which are allowed for in the legislation? Is he aware that Tayside regional council has set up an in-house advice system to give advice to those who genuinely cannot pay without resort to warrant sales and sheriff officers? I understand that that is costing the council about £250,000. Has the right hon. Gentleman made an allowance in the settlement for that expenditure? If not, does that mean that he prefers sheriff officers and warrant sales to the negotiated settlement of outstanding debts?

Mr. Lang: Substantial allowances have been made in the funding of local authorities to take account of the cost of community charge administration. I do not believe that it is as uncollectable as the hon. Gentleman implies. The signs are that the collection of rates will run at something over 90 per cent. of budgeted sums and that local authorities, by adapting their expenditure profiles by a relatively small proportion, need not expect to increase the burden on those who have paid to cover those who have not. But it is important that local authorities use the powers available to them to collect the community charge. Not to do so is in breach of their statutory obligation.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement of the additional help for businesses, but is he aware that the eight constituencies with the highest unemployment in Scotland in December were all in Glasgow, which has only 11 constituencies? When will the right hon. Gentleman give enough money to Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council to enable them to do something to reduce the scandalously high unemployment in the city? When will he realise that Glasgow is a special case requiring special measures?

Mr. Lang: It is the high-spending authorities covering Glasgow that have led to so much unemployment and the loss of so many businesses from Glasgow. I worked for nearly 20 years in Glasgow and I saw businesses driven out of the city by high rates. The rescue that we have mounted will save businesses in Glasgow and throughout Scotland from the depredations of local authorities over the years. No longer will local authorities be able to treat them as they did in the past as an easy source of funds. Now the business community will be protected by the uniform business rate that we are introducing and today is a major step in that direction.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Since the Government's Green Paper in 1986 on the reform of local government finance there has been a suggestion that special arrangements would be made for businesses in Orkney and Shetland where the oil terminals dominate local government finance. On a number of occasions, the Secretary of State's predecessor and other Scottish Office Ministers have reassured me that that is being discussed between Government and council officials. When will some colour be given to those bold proposals made back in 1986?

Mr. Lang: Orkney and Shetland always seem to be a special case on every occasion and in every respect. I shall need to look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman raises. I am sorry that I do not have those facts at my fingertips tonight.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Does the Secretary of State know the percentages that have been collected in Scotland? It is false to say that 90 per cent. has been collected. Up until last month 63 per cent. had not been collected in Strathclyde alone—a total of £285 million. The only way in which the local authorities will be able to compensate for that loss is by cutting the services, for which there has been no provision. The authority is still suffering from last year when £47 million remained uncollected. Obviously the people of Scotland, and in particular the people of Glasgow and Strathclyde, do not want the sort of chicken-feed handout that the Government are offering them. They want a fair system based on the ability to pay. Today's fraudulent statement, dangling a carrot possibly for the next election, is nonsense. The Government have said that they will review it and it is time that they came up with new plans.

Mr. Lang: If anybody is misleading the House on the collection rates, it could be the hon. Gentleman. I am not suggesting that he is; he may have misunderstood the figure that he quoted. The collection rate this year is running at broadly the same level as it was at the same time last year. On the basis of last year's figures, it now seems that the total collected will exceed 90 per cent. of the amounts budgeted. In some parts of Scotland it will be around 95 per cent. or more. Therefore, it is possible to collect the charge and to run local authority budgets without imposing additional budgets next year on those who have contributed their share.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I welcome the Secretary of State's announcement on the business rate, the capital programme and the fact that his figures are based on actual poll tax payment. I also welcome the Secretary of State to the world of reality which he entered like his colleagues earlier, when he called the community charge the poll tax. We welcome that revelation from the Secretary of State. I ask the Secretary of State again if he will consider abolishing the 20 per cent. rule because it costs more to collect than it is worth. The Secretary of State said that he would give details of the capital programme, but before he does so will he specifically consider the allocation of funds for a new high school in Rutherglen?

Mr. Lang: I am interested that the hon. Gentleman has started the bidding under the capital component of the announcement. I welcome his thanks for the business rate changes and I am grateful that those are widely welcomed throughout the House. The abolition of the 20 per cent. rule is one factor for consideration in the broader and more fundamental review that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, I and other colleagues in Government are undertaking. It is not something that we felt able to contemplate tonight. The £140 million package of what the Labour party is pleased to call new money that I have been able to announce tonight will, I believe, be a welcome way of using the resources for the benefit of Scotland.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): What will be the consequences to the poll tax payer in Argyll and Bute following the recent severe storms which resulted in extensive damage? I know that the Secretary of State has triggered the Bellwin scheme, and I am grateful for that, but it is a restrictive scheme which is barely worth the

[Mrs. Ray Michie]

paper that it is written on. Will the Government or the poll tax payer finance the cost of, for example, repairing the extensive damage to sea walls in Rothesay and Dunoon? In addition, many recreation areas vital to the tourist industry have literally disappeared—for example, the Shinty pitch at Tighnabruaich, which is very important to it. Can the Secretary of State give some advice, please?

Mr. Lang: My advice is that those concerned should find a flat field somewhere else and build a new pitch. I appreciate the difficulties that the storms created for some communities, particularly on Bute and on the Ayrshire coast—but in other parts of Scotland as well, including Dumfries and Galloway.

I was glad to be able to trigger the Bellwin scheme at an early date, so that local authorities know that there is a capacity to provide assistance. Once the cost of the measures has been calculated, it will be easier to assess the amount of assistance for which applicants will be eligible. The trigger point is obviously lower in the case of small district councils than in large regions. The scheme exists to help in the event of catastrophe.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): How can the Secretary of State expect local authorities to produce long-term or even short-term financial plans when there is such a hotch-potch of revenue support grant settlements? The whole system of local government revenue, including the continued existence of the poll tax, is supposed to be under reveiw—if we are to believe the Prime Minister, who recently reiterated that in respect of the poll tax review, nothing is ruled in and nothing is ruled out. When will the Secretary of State get it into his skull that the majority of Scots want to see the poll tax kicked out along with all the Tory politicians—the Secretary of State included—who were responsible for foisting it upon the people of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: Local authorities' long-term planning need not be affected by my announcement today, because the benefit of the community charge reduction scheme will pass through to community charge payers and will not directly affect local authorities themselves, other than in the administration—and they are already administering the earlier two schemes.

Long-term planning by local authorities would be considerably advanced if Opposition Members such as the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) set a better example to their constituents and to everyone else in Scotland by paying their own share towards local government finance.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Does the Secretary of State plan to mitigate the effects of the high water charges that some local authorities will have to introduce due to factors outside their control? It is largely Community directives that lead to those higher charges, and the right hon. Gentleman knows that most people on lower incomes do not receive any particular help in meeting them.

Mr. Lang: Recently, we made changes to water charges in order to create greater transparency, so that the costs incurred by local authorities would relate more closely to the charges made. I am sure that that is a fairer system, though I acknowledge that it produced a substantial increase for payers in some local authority areas. That system is not directly affected by my announcement. However, when I made my public expenditure statement last December, I announced a substantial increase in capital expenditure on water and sewerage.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As to the economic and other problems that bedevil Inverclyde district council, I hope that when councillor Harry Mulholland and his colleagues meet the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), they will receive a sympathetic hearing.

The Secretary of State mentioned certain poll tax relief provisions. I remind him of the discrepancy between Scottish and English merchant seamen. It is disgraceful that Scottish merchant seamen can find themselves paying the poll tax, whereas their English comrades are given exemption. Why is the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), so unsympathetic to their case, and why are community charge registration officers so unwilling to advise them on their rights of appeal? Incidentally, the appeals procedure in Scotland is much more cumbersome than that which obtains in England. South of the border, such cases are heard by an appeals tribunal, but in Scotland an appellant must apply to the sheriff court. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that that disgraceful state of affairs will come to an end in the near future?

Mr. Lang: It is significant that when arrangements in Scotland are the same as in England, Scottish Opposition Members complain that the Government are not taking account of the special, traditional differences between the two countries—but where differences apply, the same hon. Members argue that they should not exist. The law and the policy are basically the same. It is essentially a matter for the registration officer, and I anticipate that once the scheme has settled down and more examples are available of how registration officers have reacted to certain situations, the hon. Gentleman's complaint will be seen to be unjustified.

The meeting to which the hon. Gentleman referred is to take place tomorrow. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) is a sympathetic individual, and I am sure that the delegation will receive a fair hearing.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Why has the Secretary of State not given special consideration to Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley district, which has the highest unemployment of any travel-to-work area in mainland Britain and only a small number of firms contributing to the business rate? The right hon. Gentleman should surely give that area special consideration when making his allocations.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that his regional allocation will take account of an early start to the A77? In view of the delay in beginning that project, will the right hon. Gentleman give Strathclyde region a kick up the behind?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman referred to the high unemployment rate in his constituency. He shares that travel-to-work area with me and my constituency, and that is almost all that the hon. Gentleman and I have in common. Businesses there will benefit from the substantial

cash input for business rate reductions that I announced. Community charge payers eligible for benefit under the reduction scheme, and who were eligible under the earlier schemes, will also benefit substantially from my announcement tonight.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the delay in starting work on the A77 is not of the Government's making but is the fault of Strathclyde regional council, and I urge the hon. Gentleman to take the matter up with that authority.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 4 FEBRUARY

Members successful in the ballot were:
Mr. David Martin
Mr. Ron Davies
Mr. Peter Viggers

BILLS PRESENTED

British Technology Group

Mr. Secretary Lilley, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. Secretary Wakeham, Mr. John Gummer, Mr. Secretary Waldegrave, Mr. David Mellor, and Mr. Edward Leigh, presented a Bill to provide for the vesting of the property, rights and liabilities of the National Research Development Corporation and the National Enterprise Board in a company nominated by the Secretary of State and for the subsequent dissolution of the Corporation and Board; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 59.]

Ministerial and Other Pensions and Salaries

Mr. John MacGregor, supported by Mr. David Mellor, presented a Bill to make new provision with respect to the pensions payable to or in respect of persons who have held the office of Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, Speaker of the House of Commons or Lord Chancellor; to relate the salary of the Lord Chancellor to that of the Lord Chief Justice; to provide for the making of grants to persons ceasing to hold ministerial and certain other offices and the payment of an allowance to persons holding those offices who are members of the House of Lords; to make new provision for determining the Exchequer contributions to the Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund; and to extend the purposes for which payments can be made under section 4(1) of the House of Commons Members' Fund Act 1948: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 60.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Traffic Areas (Reorganisation) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

House of Commons (Services)

7.28 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Report to the House of Commons Commission on House of Commons Services (House of Commons Paper No. 38).

This may seem a distracting day on which to consider the management of the House of Commons, but perhaps there is a certain symbolic value, because at the very time that our country has been compelled to go to war, we nevertheless attend to the needs of democracy in our determination to ensure full democratic debate on this and other issues, and that our democracy is well and efficiently served.

Before examining the background to the Ibbs report and the detail of what is proposed, I want to place on record the gratitude of the House of Commons Commission for the enormous effort put into the report's preparation by Sir Robin Ibbs himself and by the efficient team of officers and civil servants who worked with him, and to the staff of the House, who co-operated so readily with him.

The Commission decided in late April last year to invite Sir Robin Ibbs to lead a team to undertake a review of management and decision-taking responsibilities for services to the House. The team's report was ready for consideration by the Commission by mid-October. It is short, concise and clear. It is based upon a great deal of information, and draws on interviews with more than 80 individuals, yet it is readable and to the point.

The report's recommendations provide a framework for action, but leave the Commission to fill in the details. Most important, the report seems to reflect, with considerable accuracy, the worries which hon. Members have about the way in which services are managed. Its recommendations are, accordingly, realistic, and in most respects they are likely to find favour with hon. Members on both sides of the House. If hon. Members care to look at the summary of recommendations, or at the report in more detail, I think that they will find that, in his aims and his attempts to improve the quality of services and decision-making procedures, Sir Robin and the committee have identified faults about which they are concerned.

The present administrative arrangements derive their authority from the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978. That was based largely upon the recommendations in a report to the then Speaker, Mr. Selwyn Lloyd, by a Committee of Members, chaired by Mr. Arthur Bottomley, who is now Lord Bottomley. At that time he was the hon. Member for Teesside.

The Bottomley proposals were concerned, first, to preserve the traditional independence of Departments of the House, to ensure that all the principal officers retained their direct access to Mr. Speaker and their ability to give entirely independent advice to all other hon. Members. The result was the creation of a federal administrative structure, albeit dedicated to the creation of a common service for the House.

The second, and the most important, feature of the Bottomley proposals was the existence of the principle that hon. Members should control their own services. Therefore, under the 1978 Act, the House of Commons Commission was established to act both as the employer of

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

permanent staff of the House, and as the body responsible for the preparation and presentation of the estimates required to meet the costs of the House of Commons.

Having served on the Commission since it was created, I am tempted to think that it is the Commission's quiet efficiency that has led to the fact that 37 per cent. of hon. Members claim that they know nothing at all about it, and 13 per cent. have never even heard of it, according to the Ibbs report. Surely that demonstrates the quiet competence with which the Commission goes about its work—there may be other reasons, in which case they will emerge during the debate.

The Commission has two important features which are not as widely appreciated as I think they should be. The Commission does not have a built-in Government majority. It is chaired very effectively by you, Mr. Speaker, and your political independence is assured. It also consists of the Leader of the House, the shadow Leader of the House and three other hon. Members appointed by the House. From the beginning it was accepted that these three would represent, respectively, the Government and official Opposition Back Benches and the other parties in the House. Therefore, the Commission includes only two hon. Members from the Government side and three from the Opposition. As a result the Government cannot, even if they would seek to do so, control the Commission's decisions.

Secondly, in financial matters—with which the Commission is largely concerned—that independence from Government is of crucial importance because, almost alone among the public service votes, estimates for the administration of the House are presented to Parliament not by the Chief Secretary but by you, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Commission. This would be of little significance if the Commission were not genuinely free from Executive control, but because it is, over the years it has been able to increase staff levels, where necessary, to meet the increased demands of hon. Members for services from the House Departments.

The Commission has refused to be drawn into the formal constraints of the Government's cash limit system, and has judged the need for staff increases on the merits of each case.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is there any guarantee that at some future date the Commission will not be cash-limited? Is anything about that written into its articles of association or founding documents?

Mr. Beith: The fact that the Commission is not in the cash-limiting system preserves the Commission's right to present its own estimates to the House. That right will be preserved even, as I shall explain later, in respect of those functions which the Commission will acquire if the recommendations in the report are carried out—functions which are now carried out by Government. Although the financial arrangements for those services which relate to the building will be different, the Commission will still preserve the right to present its own estimates.

The Commission has been able to contribute directly to addressing the balance of advantage between Parliament and the Executive. It is very much to the credit of successive Leaders of the House that they have, in my experience, always supported the Commission's independence and have backed it in resisting pressure from successive Chief Secretaries to reinstate Treasury control over the expenditure of the House. It is especially remarkable considering the ministerial experience of the previous four Leaders of the House—all of whom have served as Treasury Ministers—which is an argument for gamekeepers turning poachers.

Nevertheless, there are certain important constraints on the Commission's freedom of action. First, we are required by statute to ensure that the pay, grading and conditions of service for staff of the House are kept "broadly in line" with those in the home civil service. Secondly, the Commission does not seek financial provisions for entirely new services which have not been approved by the House. Far and away the most important constraint is the limited range of services for which the Commission is responsible. That is the source of much of the confusion to which I referred earlier and the reason why so many hon. Members do not know what the Commission does. The Commission has not been responsible for maintaining the building in which we work, as that has been the responsibility of Government, in the form of the Property Services Agency —which is now Property Holdings. The Commission is, therefore, responsible for less than half the expenditure on House of Commons services. The Ibbs report seeks to address that constraint in particular.

The conclusion of the report which has attracted the most attention is the "almost universal dissatisfaction" among hon. Members about accommodation. The report recommends that responsibility for the House of Commons part of the parliamentary works budget should therefore be transferred to the Commission—probably with effect from the beginning of the financial year starting in April 1992.

In practice, it seems likely that for the time being the day-to-day provision of parliamentary works services will continue to be done by the staff of the Parliamentary Works Office. It is important to emphasise that the criticisms of the accommodation services, which are detailed in the Ibbs report, are criticisms of the decision-making system, not of the staff of the Parliamentary Works Office. Like so many other servants of the House, the PWO staff give loyal service to Parliament, despite the ambiguity of their present status, in which they seek to serve the House and the wishes of hon. Members and of those in another place, but are employed by and directly responsible to the Secretary of State, not to the House.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Does the hon. Gentleman construe the proposal that the House of Commons Commission should take responsibility for the votes for the premises to include the change that the staff of the House of Commons would be protected under health and safety legislation and food hygiene legislation, which does not apply on these premises at present because they are under Crown immunity?

Mr. Beith: That is not a direct consequence of the proposals in the report. The question is rather more complex than the hon. Gentleman suggests, which is why I hesitate to give an off-the-cuff answer. The legal definitions on which the Commission has sought advice are very complex. The Commission sought to act on the same basis as it would have acted upon had we been fully

subject to that legislation. The hon. Gentleman raises a proper matter, which is actively and often considered by the Commission.

As a result of the proposed transfer of responsibilities for the buildings and accommodation services, the report recommends the appointment of a director of works and supporting staff in the Serjeant at Arms' Department. The expectation is that the director of works would provide similar services for the other place.

The transfer of responsibility for the works programme will involve a significant increase in the financial responsibilities of the House of Commons Commission. From the beginning of the Ibbs inquiry, the Commission has recognised that that may require a more formal arrangement with the Treasury.

Annex F of the report sets out a possible basis for agreement with the Treasury in respect of the works budget alone. That does not affect any of the existing arrangements about the rest of our expenditure. It will involve agreement between the Commission and Ministers about the long-term rolling programme for expenditure on buildings and accommodation services, and about the size of the annual estimate for the works vote. However, the Commission will remain free to submit what it regards as an appropriate estimate to the House, and it will be for the House to resolve any disagreement that might arise with the Treasury. Treasury Ministers have now agreed that the responsibility for the works budget should be transferred on that basis. It seems unlikely that, in practice, any disagreements will arise between the Commission and the Treasury which cannot be resolved before the annual estimates are published.

In addition to the works budget, the Ibbs report proposes that the Commission should take full responsibility for all other House of Commons expenditure, apart from hon. Members' salaries and allowances. The other main item will be the cost of printing and publication of House papers and the provision of stationery and office equipment, which is currently met by Her Majesty's Stationery Office on "allied service" terms. In addition, it is proposed that the Commission should assume responsibility for the Commons component in the grants in aid to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the British American Parliamentary Group and the History of Parliament Trust, and for the cost of publicity services provided by the Central Office of Information.

The second major, far-reaching recommendation in the Ibbs report flows from the conclusion that the House lacked most of the financial management tools that are now common throughout the private sector and the public service. The report refers to the

"absence of readily usable, comprehensive cost information",

and concludes in paragraph 17:

"At a time when the need to demonstrate cost-consciousness is widely accepted, not least by Parliamentary Committees, arrangements in the House, far from setting a standard for others to follow, are a complex anachronism. A complete overhaul of financial systems is an inescapable necessity."

The report therefore proposes the introduction of a comprehensive financial management system in the development of an enhanced corporate management role for the Board of Management. House Departments will in future be expected to budget more effectively, to seek to meet performance targets and indicators and to report regularly to the Commission and the House on their success or otherwise in meeting the objectives set for them.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Did the inquiry find that previous Governments had been mistaken in regard to the allocation of funds, especially for accommodation? Is that why the accommodation that Members require has not been provided, and is it why the central complaint in the report relates to the lack of such accommodation?

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman—who is very knowledgeable about such matters, because of his Committee service—must draw his own conclusions about the effectiveness with which the report deals with that complaint. His view, however, is echoed by many other hon. Members, especially those who have been in the House for a long time. Implicit in the report is a belief that it would have been much better had the maintenance, improvement and extension of our buildings been the subject of a proper system of management and control run by the House itself, with the House determining its priorities and ensuring that they could be met over a period.

To cope with the more demanding financial regime, the report proposes the appointment of a new director of finance to head the reorganised Finance and Administration Department, and the introduction of improved financial information and management systems in all Departments of the House. At the same time, the National Audit Office will be invited to take a much closer interest in the financial administration of the House.

The main initiative for the appointment of Sir Robin Ibbs to lead the inquiry came from the former Leader of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe). During his short but productive tenure, the right hon. and learned Gentleman became acutely aware of the difficulties involved in improving facilities and services for Members in the face of the multitude of decision-making bodies in the House. I recall discussing with him, for example, the request often put to us for a crèche or day care facility for the children of staff. Let me leave aside for the moment the arguments for and against that proposal; the number and complexity of the bodies involved in assessing such a proposal is mind-boggling.

The former Leader of the House met many such requests, and was under sustained and increasing pressure from Back-Benchers on both sides of the House for better accommodation and services. He was made only too aware of the lack of a central focus for decisions. The effect of the Ibbs proposals will be to establish the House of Commons Commission as just such a focus, although it is important to emphasise that the Commission will not be acting on its own.

Valuable work is at present undertaken on our behalf by the Services Committee and, in particular, by the Sub-Committees of that Committee. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) and the hon. Members for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving) and for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) carry especially heavy responsibility on behalf of the House, both advising on Members' needs for services and, not infrequently, giving what amount to directives to the Departments of the House and others responsible for providing those services.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Ibbs report recommends the replacement of the Services Committee by four free-standing Committees, plus one rather important Finance and Services Committee. It is proposed that the membership and chairmanship of the two groups should be interlocking, and that they should make recommendations to the Commission.

What are the distinct advantages of that system, as opposed to any modifications of the present one? The absence of comment on the work of the Services Committee, much of which is done by word of mouth, is testament to its present efficiency, and I cannot for the moment see any benefit in the Ibbs proposals.

Mr. Beith: The key disadvantage of the present system is the lack of any clear focus of responsibility on determining priorities and assessing how recommendations can be acted on, how requests can be met, how funds can be found and what costs can be reasonably incurred. I do not think that the House can advocate procedures for others to ensure that costs are provided efficiently and cost-effectively and then not adopt such procedures itself.

In many instances, the wishes and ambitions that are expressed through the Committees—particularly the Services Committee—cannot be met by those Committees, which may not be part of any mechanism whereby such requests can be dealt with. No one starting afresh would set up such a system to ensure that money was spent well and wisely on the provision of services for Members.

The Committees to which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred—the free-standing Committees that would replace the Services Committee Sub-Committees—are designed principally to represent the interests of Members, as consumers of the services provided for the House. In addition, a new Finance and Services Committee, on which each of the new "consumer" Committees will be represented, will act as a filter for financial advice to the House of Commons Commission. The Commission has felt the need for a more effective filter for such advice, although it is advised very effectively on demands for specific services.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): In his opening remarks, my hon. Friend pointed out that the present Commission has an interesting party balance: at least the minority parties are represented, as my hon. Friend is now eloquently showing. Will the new proposals give a proper place to the interests of minority parties?

Mr. Beith: Naturally, I agree with my hon. Friend that this is an important matter. It was certainly considered when Sir Robin and his team talked to Members in the House and prepared their reports. In those discussions, it was felt—I shall continue to express this view on the Commission—that minority parties must be represented, certainly on the Finance and Services Committee, and perhaps providing a Chairman for one of the specialist Committees. I am sure that my hon. Friend's point will be noted.

What is important is that, ultimately, one body—the Commission—will carry responsibility for decisions about services and the allocation of resources to them. At present, responsibilities are so widely diffused that it is often impossible to know who is answerable for what. I suggest that any hon. Member who doubts that should attend Monday's Question Time and note the amazing overlap of responsibility between myself answering on behalf of the Commission, the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Cheltenham, who replies on behalf of the Catering Sub-Committee from time to time.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): If there is to be a sharper focus on costs, what is likely to be the impact on catering losses? I understand that there is a true loss of £2·5 million, which works out at about £100 a week per Member while the House is sitting.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the House catering services are a major facility, although they are used primarily not by Members but by their staff and the staff of the House. It is important that those services are provided cost-effectively, and that the extent of any subsidy that is thought appropriate—as is often the case in many commercial and industrial concerns—is fully understood and properly accounted for.

Hon. Members may know that the Commission has recently received a separate report from outside consultants on the management of the Refreshment Department. That report was placed in the Library. The Commission is to consider representations from Members and staff on that review. The Commission has a continuing concern to ensure that the catering services are efficiently and cost-effectively provided. It is our view that the structures proposed under the Ibbs report will provide the most effective framework within which that can be done. The report does not address itself to all the questions that have to be considered in restructuring the management of the refreshment services, but it provides the best overall framework within which it can be done.

The Ibbs reforms will place responsibility for the Refreshment Department, as for other services, squarely on the shoulders of the Commission. But the new Select Committees will have a vital role in advising the Commission about how the services of the Refreshment Department, and other Departments of the House, should be organised to meet Members' needs.

The overall aim of the Ibbs report is to produce a single, coherent structure responsible for funding services for the House, and greater efficiency and accountability in the delivery of services. I believe that its implementation will assist the process of democracy by ensuring that the facilities Members need to represent their constituents and to bring the Executive to account can be provided efficiently and cost-effectively. The Commission looks forward to considering the views of hon. Members on the various aspects of the report, which we commend to the House.

7.51 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has given us a most helpful introduction to this debate by explaining, as a member of the Commission, how he sees the implications of the Ibbs report. It is a welcome document. As the hon. Member said, it is necessary for things to be changed. I see it as a natural progression in the management of the affairs of the House from former days, when it was a royal palace where Parliament was present on sufferance, through to the proposal under which Parliament will have control of its own domain.

I remember, when I first came to the House, that one of the first steps in this direction was the setting up by the late Dick Crossman of the Services Committee in 1965 or 1966.

All I remember is that I was a member of that Committee for a number of years in the 1960s. It is right to make this further move, partly because of the massive growth in the cost of Parliament to public funds, and it is right to have it under what appears to be more sensible control.

During his introductory speech, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed did not say how big the Commission should be. I hesitate to become involved in this, but I wonder whether only six members will be enough when one considers all its new, large and important functions. It might be better in the future if it were rather larger.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed pointed out the result of the MORI poll, which demonstrated the view of virtually all hon. Members that the accommodation in the building is abysmal. I know that those who have to deal with accommodation do a heroic job in spreading around among a number of demanding people a very limited amount of accommodation. You and I, Mr. Speaker, in previous incarnations have had some experience of dealing with the demands—they can be extremely bad-tempered—for accommodation. It is absurd to expect hon. Members to work, as they do, in corridors, cubbyholes or cleaning cupboards, particularly with the new pressures that have been placed upon them over the years.

I welcome what is being done to improve that situation. I have not been to look at the new office premises that have been constructed across the road, because I do not particularly want the inconvenience of crossing the road to get to my office. However, I hope that the Commission or whoever deals with these matters will not go mad. It is easy for authorities to go mad in supplying what is said to be adequate accommodation.

I remember about 25 years ago going to visit one of the office buildings adjoining the Capitol building in Washington just after it had been built. I was taken into one of the new offices by a friend of mine, who was a distinguished Republican Member of the House of Representatives from California. He was the ranking Republican on the maritime committee and the second ranking Republican on the foreign relations committee.

He showed a number of us the absurd bank of safes that had been constructed. He said that the committees received some confidential documents but we were looking at a massive bank of safes in a fairly large room alongside his office. He ferreted in his pocket and produced some combinations, opened the doors and invited us in to see that the safe space was too large for his needs. We all went in and found that all he kept there were two bottles of whisky and one bottle of gin.

I hope that that sort of thing will not happen here. I hope that there will be some sensible prudence in ensuring that hon. Members have acceptable office accommodation.

I want to draw my principal point to the attention of the Commission and the Government. I want to put down a marker on behalf of a number of groups referred to in annex D to the Ibbs report, to which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred. Those groups are the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the History of Parliament Trust and the British American Parliamentary Group, of which I am the honorary secretary. Those four bodies are currently grant-aided bodies in Parliament, sponsored and directly paid for by the Treasury.

A year or two ago—I forget exactly when—the Treasury proposed a change in the system of support for those bodies. It suggested that the support should be shifted to the budget of Parliament. The executive committees of those four groups came to the conclusion that that was not a good thing. We had a meeting with the Treasury and, after discussions, it was agreed about a year ago that it was better to leave the funding with the Treasury and allow it to continue to sponsor the four groups.

Immediately after that, we had the Ibbs report, which in annex D seems to suggest again that the costs be transferred from the Treasury to the House of Commons Commission. Since the publication of the report, those four groups have had a meeting, at which I presided, to discuss the report. All four groups took an open-minded approach to whether it would be sensible to move the support and funding from the Treasury to the Commission. There are strong arguments both ways.

However, two of the executive committees that I know well—the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association executive, of which I am a member, and the British American Parliamentary group—have not yet discussed in detail the decision about which way we should move. Although Ibbs has recommended that, I hope that the Commission and the Government will not embrace it but will, please, engage in discussions with representatives of the four groups to try to reach agreement, which should not prove too difficult.

There are several problems. For instance, all the groups have substantial membership from the House of Lords. Therefore, joint funding from the House of Lords and the House of Commons would be a problem. That problem could be overcome, but it would arise if we moved to obtaining funding from the Commission's budget.

The groups receive grant from the Treasury, which leaves them to manage their own affairs. If we changed to support from the House of Commons Commission and the House of Lords Commission, if there were to be one, would it lead to a loss of autonomy? Would it mean that ultimate responsibility for the management of the groups passed to, perhaps, the Clerk's Department or the new reinvigorated Services Committee? Here, again, a further problem arises with arrangements for accommodation and staffing.

Those problems must be resolved, and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will agree to discussions with the four groups to try to work out the most sensible and reasonable solution to what is not too serious a problem. However, we do not want the problem pre-empted by decisions being taken without discussion.

8.1 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I find the Ibbs report disappointing, although it is a useful start to a discussion on these important issues.

It is true that the terms of reference of the Ibbs team were restricted, but the report is superficial and fails to follow through its own logic. Its most culpable fault is that it is too deferential to the established order.

The central feature of House of Commons services is that they are well administered. Hon. Members get all the service we could possibly ask for from the Clerk's Department, the Library, the Refreshment Department

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and the Department of the Serjeant at Arms. The House is well administered but poorly managed, due to an amateurish House of Commons which has never sought to improve the services of the House.

Sir Edmund Compton's report on the same subject in 1974 got much closer to the central issue. Its key passage states:

"My assessment of Members' requirements of service from the staff of the House is that the time has come for a significant shift of activity from procedural services to administrative and management services—that is, to develop the organisation and staffing of the services that support and assist Members in their life and work in the House."

That led Sir Edmund to the inescapable conclusion that the services of the House had to have a chief executive. That still seems to be true, and to be the logical conclusion of the findings of the Ibbs report. It is dismissed by the Ibbs report in a single line.

We may not have to look too far to find out why the Ibbs team did not take up the possibility of a chief executive. The Compton report's recommendation produced an irate response from the then Clerk of the House, who wrote a furious memorandum to the Bottomley committee, which considered the report, claiming that what happened in the Chamber was of paramount importance, that it dwarfed all else in the service of the House and that that made him the senior officer of the House. He suggested that all Departments report to him.

It is true that, as accounting officer, the Clerk is the senior officer of the House and, nowadays, de facto chief executive, but in recent years the Treasury has greatly enlarged the role of all accounting officers. In 1866, when they were invented, their job simply was to sign the accounts as correct, but nowadays the Treasury memorandum on the duty of an accounting officer requires an accounting officer to ensure that all managers under his command—his or her command; there is one female permanent secretary—should have objectives, performance measures and management information systems.

The Clerk of the House, with all his heavy and complex procedural duties in direct service of the House, as well as running a complicated Department of his own, cannot fulfil those terms of reference. He cannot act as a managing director of an institution that costs more than £130 million a year to run.

Worse still, the Ibbs report proposes that ultimate responsibility for management should continue to be shared between you, Mr. Speaker, who would handle non-financial matters, which I suppose includes labour relations of 1,000 members of staff, and the Clerk, who would handle financial matters. You, Mr. Speaker, know best. I know that you cannot intervene in this debate, but you will agree that you are in no position to act as chief executive, bearing in mind all your many representational duties and the fact that, since the televising of the House, you have become a substantial international figure. With all the demands on your time, it is ridiculous to require you, with the Clerk of the House, to act as the managing director of an institution which costs more than £130 million a year to run.

Mr. Spearing: I am glad that my hon. Friend has given way. I assure him that I have not consulted the Clerk or you, Mr. Speaker, on what I am about to say. Is it not possible that the former Clerk may have been over-egging, but justifiably egging, the pudding? Although a chief executive may be more efficient in dealing with technical matters and the matters of importance that my hon. Friend mentioned, is it not vital that services be oriented to the demands of the Chamber and what happens here, not to the administrative convenience of a chief executive? Therefore, the priorities of serving the House must be related to the services required by Members, as seen by the Clerk and by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Garrett: No, my hon. Friend is quite wrong. He confuses the Chamber with the House.

Mr. Spearing: It all happens here.

Mr. Garrett: It does not all happen here. It happens in Committees, in our constituency case work and in the way in which we relate to the communities that we represent. The Chamber is no longer necessarily the focal point of the House of Commons. My hon. Friend may think that, and when he makes his speech he can explain why he thinks so. I referred to the Compton report, which said that the procedural demands of the House should no longer be paramount—a conclusion with which I agree.

Most of the Ibbs report is taken up with describing the chaos of the accounting systems. There is no costing, no planning and no budgetary control and its analysis of the antiquated systems that we operate is very useful. The Ibbs report is right to propose that all House of Commons services should be brought under the control of the Commission.

It is ridiculous, for example, that we do not have control of this building. It points out that the costs of the House are covered by seven votes, for which responsibility is distributed among five accounting officers. Those seven votes cover our expenditures, but not all the accounting officers are in the service of the House.

That still leaves Members' pay and allowances with the Treasury. It is wrong that the Executive should impose conditions of service on the legislature; only a supine legislature would allow that. All the costs, including Members' pay and allowances, should come under the control of the Commission.

Mr. Beith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should express the present position a little more clearly. The Top Salaries Review Body makes recommendations about Members' pay and allowances, and the House determines whether those or other recommendations should be acted upon, sometimes in defiance of the Government's wishes. The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point about whether it would be appropriate to bring that duty within the Commission's responsibility, but there is another view—that it is better for the recommendations to come from an outside body and have them determined on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Garrett: I am familiar with that argument, but, more often than not, the amount of money given to Members of Parliament in, for example, allowances is determined by the Government and is not determined often enough by the House.

The Ibbs report creates the position of director of finance—which is necessary—but makes him adviser to the Clerk. If accounting and budgeting matters are so bad, I believe that the director should be independent.

Ibbs also creates a director of works with, I am glad to see, a direct labour organisation—which is also necessary—but makes him report to the Serjeant at Arms; so an Officer with a proposed annual spend of £35 million and a backlog of work involving no less than £220 million will report to an Officer of the House whose spend is £3 million. I believe that that director should be independent, too.

There is a great silence at the centre of the Ibbs report—the Comptroller and Auditor General is missing. There is no doubt that, since the National Audit Act 1983, the Comptroller and Auditor General is an Officer of the House. He is an expert on financial control. Why is he not therefore on the Board of Management? The reason is that the Treasury has never accepted him as an Officer of the House and would strongly resist any such formal appointment.

The top structure for the management of the services of the House should be six departmental heads and should include a director of finance, a director of works and the Comptroller and Auditor General—all under a chief executive reporting to the Commission. I do not think that, with a chief executive charged to improve the services of the House, it would have taken the 30 years it took to establish the need for and location of a new parliamentary building. After all, it took only 15 years to build the entire Palace of Westminster.

If I understand the Ibbs report correctly—perhaps someone will explain to me if I am wrong—a further weakness is that it proposes the abolition of the Services Select Committee, although it appears to recreate it as a Finance and Services Select Committee. The proposed new Committee is a management body, preparing estimates, advising the Commission and carrying tasks out on its behalf. It is not a Select Committee, holding hearings, examining witnesses and producing reports and recommendations for change and improvements on behalf of the House—it would not be empowered to do so.

We know from the Ibbs recommendation that the proposed Committee should move away from a process of taking evidence. It would be there to serve, not prod, management. The House would thereby lose its only machinery for advocacy in these matters. In my view, the distinction between the providers and the users of services—us, through the Services Committee—should be clear, with the users being empowered to produce reports on the services required for Members, based on the examination of evidence put before them.

The Ibbs report also took the MORI survey of Members' opinions at face value, without looking into services that Members need but did not have sufficient knowledge to articulate that need or were not asked about. The poll showed that Members cared most about accommodation and catering. Both those problems are largely dictated by the size and age of the Palace of Westminster, and, until new buildings are available, they will have to be lived with. However, there is no reason why the people who work in this place should be under Crown immunity from health and safety and food hygiene regulations. There is no reason why those regulations cannot be made to apply to the staff of the House.

For someone trying to do a professional job as a Member of Parliament, another issue, which was missed by Ibbs, looms much larger—the primitive state of the information technology available to Members. Information technology services here are pathetic, and there have been several reports on this matter. The Government have always refused to upgrade our office equipment or even to discuss it.

The only information technology we have is a telephone line and the annunciator system, which is 30 years old and costs nearly £200,000 a year to maintain. Each box costs £1,000 because it is obsolete and has to be converted from a 425-line television set. Not long ago, a junior Minister in the Department of the Environment had the temerity to say that no replacement was necessary.

Worse still, the new building across the road is not cabled for the information technology services that we need. We need a properly cabled parliamentary estate so that we each have work stations provided by the House for word processing, for paging, for electronic mail, for accessing the Library and for a clean feed from the Chamber, as other legislatures in France, Germany, Canada and the United States have. Every attempt by the Services Committee to improve our information technology equipment has been refused by junior Ministers at the Department of the Environment, which is an abuse of Parliament.

The Ibbs report left far too much power with the Treasury. It frequently referred to the oversight of the Treasury and to arrangements for making applications for funding to the Treasury. There is a serious defect in arrangements that allow the Executive to control and ration expenditure which makes the legislature effective.

There is no evidence that the House would be profligate but for Treasury control. The House of Commons Commission has a reputation for miserliness. Look how it recently refused funding to enable Select Committees to take evidence in Europe. The Commission should be trusted to produce a plan for the development of services and directly present all the estimates for what we need to the House for its approval and its works should be scrutinised by the Services Committee.

The real problem is that Leaders of the House are not, on the whole, defenders of and advocates for the services that support the House, but are primarily concerned to defend the interests of the Executive. Perhaps the new Leader of the House will be different, but I very much doubt it. We should establish our own unilateral declaration of independence and have a Commission that is responsible for all our costs, puts them to the House and lets the House vote on them.

8.16 pm

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): To a large extent, what the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) said in both parts of his speech was music to my ears. I shall not be tempted to follow him in the earlier part of his speech, except to say that he reinforced a conclusion which I reached many years ago—virtually all political problems are boundary problems. The moment the boundary is moved, all hell breaks loose.

I could not help but profoundly concur with the hon. Gentleman's comments on information technology. I was a member of a Committee which went to Canada many years ago and produced the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and I was also a member of the Committee which produced the subsequent report which said that it was time we began to look towards the 21st century with equipment comparable to that available to our colleagues in Canada and, more recently, in Canberra.

[Sir Ian Lloyd]

That is essential. Whether we go back to the original Services Committee or whether we accept the Ibbs proposals, this must be a high priority in our thinking.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) used an interesting phrase when discussing the history of the House of Commons Commission. He referred to the balance of advantage between Parliament and the Executive. I share the view that the responsibility of the House for its expenditure should be total, detailed and visible, and that we should be responsible for it and no one else. The dilemma arises for a simple, fundamental reason—after every general election, whichever party is returned to power, the Executive is, as it were, carved out of this place by caesarean section, which creates a fundamental dilemma. Once that has happened, there is a marked change in the general character of this place. I do not see how that will be easily remedied or altered. However, we must accept that that does take place and that the basic responsibility of the House of Commons for the control of the expenditure of the nation is in a rather unsatisfactory state.

If, as has been implied this evening, the efficiency of that control demands that we as a parliamentary body and as a legislature should decide which instruments and information we need, no part of the Executive should have any say in that. If we should be extravagant or wasteful in providing ourselves with expenditure, we alone should be answerable to the nation for that extravagance. As the hon. Member for Norwich, South has said, we should not be able to blame a junior Minister for acting in between what we want and for applying his ruling to the Treasury.

We are all indebted to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed for his useful and comprehensive survey of the Ibbs report. The report is long overdue; it will be much discussed and there will be many views about it. I merely conclude that, in my experience of this place, a change in the procedures of the House is the only event that requires a longer gestation period than that of the elephant. It is very slow.

I support the main recommendations of the Ibbs report because we must move quite fundamentally. The House must take a stronger grip on its own affairs. Whether we accept the new structure proposed by Ibbs or some other structure that will eventually evolve, it must, in the words of the Ibbs report,

"respond adequately to Members' needs and to determine priorities between them."

I want to turn now to such a priority and I want to begin by declaring an unusual interest. It is not a personal or financial interest, but an interest in a subject that I believe to be a fundamental necessity for the House. I have the honour at present to be the president of the parliamentary and scientific committee and the chairman of the principal organisation about which I shall speak —the parliamentary office of science and technology. That is the technical limit of my interest which I felt that I should declare. It is entirely altruistic.

There is more than palpably today a fundamental need in all modern democratic legislatures for scientific information of the highest quality, relevance and objectivity. I can give two examples which may be of interest to the House. The Gulf war suggests to us that all modern weaponry is fundamentally dependent upon the most advanced science. The House has to decide, at least in principle, on the weaponry with which our armed forces are equipped and whether that weaponry is appropriate and cost-efficient. It will interest the House to know that one of the current projects of the parliamentary office of science and technology is on the inter-relationship between defence, and civil science and technology. That report has yet to appear, but we are working on it.

On the political side, I refer to the political impact of all the scientific work on DNA—deoxyribonucleic acid. In that context, the parliamentary office of science and technology is in the process of producing a report on research in the national health service. However, I can probably illustrate the political significance of that rather more vividly than those dry titles might suggest by referring hon. Members to an article that appeared in the most recent issue of *New Scientist* and referred to a gentleman by the name of John Moore. I wonder whether many hon. Members have heard of a Mr. John Moore —apart from our own colleague. We shall hear a great deal more about him because the case that is described in the magazine is fascinating and will have far-reaching effects on public and political life.

It is an extraordinary story. Mr. John Moore had an oversized spleen, which grew from 0·5 kg to 6 kg. When doctors took it out of his body, they discovered that he had produced a unique type of white blood cell. Given modern technology, scientists decided that that unique type of blood cell would probably be very effective against many other diseases and possibly even against cancer. Using modern technology, the scientists have taken that blood cell and reproduced it on a large scale. Two companies are now selling it.

The sale of that commodity—if I may call it that—has aroused immense interest in the United States and the case has even reached the Supreme Court because Mr. John Moore thinks that it belongs to him and the scientists think that it belongs to them. Naturally, the public think that it should belong to them. This is precisely the type of problem and dilemma that scientific research, not least in biology, will present to us. It is interesting that a senior legal analyst at the United States office of technology assessment—to which I will refer in a moment—said:

"Few people have thought through all the arguments and the many different ways of interpreting existing laws."

I want to give the House a brief history of the parliamentary office of science and technology. We have based it unashamedly on the American example, as I have said many times. We first discovered the American office in the early 1970s. A number of us visited the office in 1986 and we made a recommendation to the then Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), that our legislature needed a similar office. She was sympathetic, but reluctant to do anything other than suggest that the parliamentary and scientific committee should take full responsibility for the development of such an organisation.

We said, "Right, we accept that challenge" and there was only one way in which to do that. We had to go outside both Houses of Parliament to the rest of the country and seek financial support from industry and from foundations such as Nuffield, Leverhulme, Wellcome, the Royal Society and the British Association, all of which were generous. We received surprisingly generous support from Members of both Houses—although proportionately that support was small—and we even received some support from universities and polytechnics. As I am sure

you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, POST has, as a result, produced 20 briefing papers on a wide variety of subjects and only yesterday it produced its first major report, which I have here, entitled "Technologies for Teaching", which is a subject of great current interest.

We have also introduced the concept of the Westminster Fellow. Young scientists of some experience attach themselves to both Houses of Parliament, under the umbrella of POST, for a brief period and are financed by POST. We reached the position where we proved that such an organisation could work, that it was required and that Members of Parliament found it of great interest—and not only Members of Parliament. We have had requests for papers from as far afield as the United States and Australia as they are regarded as being of considerable quality.

I was instructed to explore the possibility of some form of central funding of a service for Parliament by Parliament itself. I wrote to the then Leader of the House, who is now Secretary of State for Energy, and asked him what he thought he could do about this proposal. His successor, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe), replied and gently equivocated. He said, "Not now. We do not think that the time has come."

I was then instructed to write to the Commission, as the Leader of the House had also suggested. I was told, "Not now. Everything is in the melting pot. Sir Robin Ibbs is doing an inquiry. Why don't you write to Sir Robin Ibbs?" I wrote to him and he sent me a polite letter saying, "This is not a matter for me." So it goes round and round. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed spoke about the great diversity of responsibility and that was shown in this instance. Improved arrangements for considering the provision of new services are most certainly required.

Where do we stand now? Our Parliament is well known to be a long way behind the United States legislature, which is the prime example of a legislature with an advanced technology assessment facility. That organisation employs a staff of 200 for technology assessment alone, with a budget of $20 million. I have never argued that we should even begin to approach that level. It is not required and it would not be appropriate; it would be extravagant in relation to our national resources. I would not dream of making such a case. But what about Denmark? The Danish Parliament has a technology assessment staff of 11 and spends 10 million to 12 million krona per annum. France has a staff of six and spends 6 million francs per annum. Germany spends DM2 million on its parliamentary assessment facilities. The Netherlands —a much smaller country than the United Kingdom—has a staff of nine and spends £1·5 million. The European Parliament—one of the most recent to embark on this path —has a modest staff of five and spends about 500,000 ecus, which is equivalent to £350,000 to £400,000.

It is interesting to note that all the technology assessment organisations to which I have referred are properly funded by the Parliaments that they serve. Ours is not. Those of us who believe that such facilities are necessary find it difficult to imagine going back to all the organisations which said, "We think that this is a good idea. We shall support it on an experimental basis and, if Parliament likes it, Parliament must fund it," and say, "Parliament likes the service. We find the reports and service that POST now supplies to Select Committees and other bodies valuable, but you—private industry and the foundations—must go on paying for it." That is illogical and, in my judgment, we should change it.

I come to my final comparison. Japan has decided that its Parliament must have an organisation of technology assessment. I hate to think what the funding for that will be. It will certainly be on a very generous scale—not surprisingly as the Government science budget is now running at about 780,000 million yen per annum, which I believe is equivalent to about £3 billion. According to the latest figures, total research and development expenditure in Japan amounts to about £32 billion.

My plea is simple and fundamental. The parliamentary office of science and technology is not just another peripheral committee. It is an organisation established by the oldest all-party committee of both Houses—the parliamentary and scientific committee, which was 50 years old last year—to supply both Houses of Parliament with a basic information service. POST has operated on an experimental basis for nearly two years with the support of the country. It needs to be firmly established on a long-term basis. It needs to be properly funded by Parliament as the basic information service for Parliament. That needs to be done as soon as possible. By that, I mean not tomorrow or next year, but now

8.32 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): When I first joined the House of Commons (Services) Committee, I had certain illusions about what I could achieve by attending its meetings, held once every eight weeks or whenever the Committee decided to meet, and the meetings of the Catering Sub-Committee, the only Sub-Committee of which I was a full member, which met whenever the Chairman thought it appropriate—often, it seemed, determined by the number of wine tastings that needed to be held rather than by the need to deal with real issues concerning food. I thought that I could do something to change the way in which the House was run. I have been under that illusion ever since I was elected to this place.

I am still committed and determined to ensure that, even if the Ibbs report is not the answer to everything, we treat it at least as the best starting point that we have had for a good many years. I have the distinct impression that the Committees on which I have served provide us with little more than a history lesson. One goes along only to be told, "This matter was raised back in 1950", or, "We thought of having a new office block then." When the managing director of ICL in my constituency came to the House for a meeting, he burst out laughing when he saw the annunciator screens. We are constantly told that people have tried but failed miserably to get anything done to change the way in which this place works. That is simply because there has never been the political will to do anything about it. Quite apart from anything else, that is one of the main reasons why we have so few women in the House. As was said earlier, one has to be almost mad to work in this place.

We need decent working conditions not only for Members of Parliament who are elected to serve democracy but for their staff and all those behind the scenes—those who run the Library so efficiently, those in the Fees Office who deal with our expenses so well and those in the Refreshment Department who do their best to

[Ms. Joan Walley]

provide food. I am not advancing an elitist argument and saying that we should do something for Members of Parliament alone. I am talking about all the people who work here. Hon. Members almost live here, as well as working here. Sometimes, I have been here for 17 hours at a stretch. I have taken the one bed available, perhaps to get three or four hours' kip before coming to the Dispatch Box. Often, I have had to get into that bed when it has just been vacated by another lady Member who was about to come to the Chamber for a debate. That is an absurd way of going about our business.

I am not being sensationalist in suggesting that we should consider the number of premature deaths among hon. Members—even during my short time in this place. If we are serious about the House and about democracy, we must take all those points on board.

The way in which the House is run is nonsensical. We are all elected to represent our areas, and we may have 70,000 constituents or more. We do not have the tools to do our job. No authority—other than one cash-starved by central Government—and no private company would expect its managing director or its employees to do their job, with all the targets that they must achieve, in such conditions. Like everyone else, hon. Members want to do a good job. We want to serve our constituents well. To do that, we need the tools. That applies not only to us but, for example, to the Refreshment Department staff. They need changing rooms and somewhere to which they can go and have a break. At the moment, they sometimes have to go to the ladies' toilet because there is nowhere else.

We also need somewhere to meet our constituents. It is all very well having banqueting rooms that one can book for a prestigious do at £15 or £20 a head. But what about the pensioners who legitimately want to lobby their Members of Parliament? Where is one to take them? One cannot even give them a cup of tea. It is no good saying, "The building is too small; we can't do anything about it." We have been waiting for the new building for years and the plans may be put back again. What difference will the extension of the Jubilee line make to the new building programme? We have nowhere to bring pensioners, school children and those who legitimately wish to lobby their Members of Parliament as part of the democratic process.

What do we need to do our job properly? What do the staff need? We need an office. I do not want to share with four other hon. Members and their researchers an office in which I have to climb over bags and bins and piles of paper to get to my desk and where there is not even room to sit at my desk. I do not want my research staff to work in such cluttered conditions. When someone comes to this place and goes beyond the lovely, well-appointed state rooms for which the House is so special they find a different story. I am often told off for raising questions about lights that do not work on the stairs behind the corridor, but if my colleagues break their wrists or injure themselves in other ways when walking down unlit corridors or over threadbare carpets there is no possibility of compensation and no one has responsibility.

If there is no way in which the Serjeant at Arms, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Commission, the Leader of the House, the Chairman of the Services Committee or the Clerks can get the lamp changed, the matter should be brought to the Floor of the House. I note the almost superficial way in which the Ibbs report refers to that. We raise matters on the Floor of the House and in questions only when we have failed to get anything done because the system does not work.

We need to have our offices and all the stairways properly cleaned. Every time I go into the Tea Room I am aware that we cannot even sort out who is responsible for what. The Catering Sub-Committee is responsible for cleaning one part of it. The PSA and someone else at the Department of the Environment is responsible for cleaning other parts.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): For not cleaning it.

Ms. Walley: My hon. Friend is right.

The areas where we eat food would be closed by environmental health officers if they were in any other public place in the country. The Ibbs report does not properly address that issue. The problem relates to Crown immunity as much as anything else. I have raised the matter in the Chamber on numerous occasions. The previous Leader of the House said that he was aware of the problems that result from Crown immunity, but I have seen no progress in having it removed.

I am mindful that when it was proposed to remove Crown immunity from hospital kitchens an enormous amount of work had to be done and new equipment brought in simply to comply with basic standards set by the legislation passed in this very Chamber. Yet we cannot even look after our own interests. There is a double standard. We simply cannot provide decent and safe conditions for not only Members but all the staff of the House and the members of the public who come here on many occasions.

I could go on at length but I am mindful of the time. In view of the large number of premature deaths among Members of Parliament, we should consider our working hours. Some people might say that it was not within the terms of reference of the Ibbs report to consider working hours, but it should have dealt with the matter. The way in which the House is run and its management is to be handed over to a Finance and Services Committee which will have executive powers. The hours during which the House operates and the way in which Committees and the business of the House are run will have a direct bearing on its work. It is high time that we reviewed the demands that are made on us. We often sit continuously for many hours. That must be urgently reviewed. Everyone who has a job to do in the House must have proper working hours.

I cannot stress strongly enough our lack of concern about healthy eating and meeting basic food regulations in the House. It is not on anyone's agenda and I do not see it on the agenda of the Ibbs report. Nor is it strategically placed on the agenda of the Touche Ross report which can be found in the Library. The report was published partly in consultation with the Ibbs committee. Linkage seems to be the word at the moment and there is linkage between the two reports.

I can almost see hon. Members saying to each other, "I hope she will not talk about healthy eating again." I have raised the need for healthy food many times in the Catering Sub-Committee. I feel like a previous Prime Minister who, when asked what he had achieved in this place, said that he had set up cats' eyes. Sometimes the only thing that I feel that I have achieved is to introduce

fresh salads in the Tea Room. Yet quiche is still served off hotplates. Proper attention is not paid to refrigeration. We do not have proper advice about the environmental health standards which apply in every other workplace in the country.

The House should not be treated differently and people should not be ridiculed for raising serious issues such as I have raised. As we have seen in the other place, serious problems of food poisoning and salmonella can result. We should not have to wait for such problems to arise before something is done.

No one seems to be responsible for cleaning in the House and it seems that no one has ever wanted to have the responsibility. I wonder whether the Ibbs report can even begin to introduce integrated management of the House. If the proposals for a new Committee are accepted, the Commission or the executive officers with responsibility for formulating the new system of management must take an integrated approach. They must make sure that the Committee has properly set out terms of reference. It should not consider the purely financial or accounting aspects of issues. It must consider how the House can comply with all the health and safety at work regulations and be a place in which people can work and members of the public can visit us in safety, as they rightly wish to do.

I could relate many occasions when we have spent hours talking about whether we should hang 79 portraits in the Harcourt Room rather than dealing with basic matters of food hygiene. However, to do so would not take the debate any further. I simply stress that we must do something about Crown immunity. I heard the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) say that it is too complicated an issue to go into. However, we have removed Crown immunity from hospital kitchens and incinerators. We have made headway in the prison service, as my hon. Friends will testify. I see no reason why the Palace of Westminster, where the legislation of this country is passed, should be exempt from the basic safety procedures and health and safety at work requirements which govern every other place in the country. I hope that something constructive can come from the report.

8.46 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly in this important debate. I recognise the intensity of feeling of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley). Having served with her for some time on the Catering Sub-Committee, I know full well her commitment and sense of purpose in these matters. I hope that she will forgive me if I do not pursue her line of argument. However, some of my remarks will impinge on what she said.

I express my thanks to Sir Robin Ibbs and his team for the way in which they conducted their inquiry, listened to the many representations made and discussed their findings with those who had made them before the report was published.

I also pay my compliments to the House of Commons Commission for the way in which it has worked. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, it is not the highest-profile body in the House, but it has had to do a tremendous amount of work since it was set up. Those charged with that authority have a substantial burden. I give a broad welcome to the findings of the Ibbs report.

There is no doubt that the speech of the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) will bear close reading by the management side—what I would call the professional side or administration—rather than the Members of the House. He made some good observations which may be a little astringent in the light of what Ibbs set out, but they are nevertheless worthy of attention.

I read the Ibbs report as a member of the House of Commons (Services) Committee since 1979, who has served on the Library Sub-Committee, the Catering Sub-Committee, the New Building Sub-Committee and the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee in the intervening years. It is a terrible catechism. The Ibbs Committee listened to my observations about the necessity of having larger sub-committees or larger committees studying the various sectors. There is a need to ensure that the hon. Members selected to serve have a substantial interest in the committee, or there will be a low attendance and the committee will not achieve the level of debate which is essential to proper decisions. I know full well the difficulty of securing a quorum when there are other pressures in the House. It is frustrating not to have the extent of attendance at a Select Committee meeting to enable it to discuss in the depth which one would like the problems on the agenda for the day.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South said that the abolition of Select Committees was not a good thing. Select Committees and the Sub-Committees of the Services Committee have worked best in my experience when they have been in deliberative rather than investigative mode. That is not to say that they cannot switch into investigative mode when it is appropriate. We have achieved our best work when discussing matters in conjunction with the professionals of the House. If necessary, we have set up the procedure in such a way so as to examine the professionals of the House and other witnesses, and reported accordingly.

That is the way in which we have progressed in respect of the Library. With the team work which has been built up as a consequence we have been able to sustain the high level of services offered by the Library to which tribute is rightly paid in the report. I thank the hon. Member for Norwich, South for his reference to the quality of service provided by the Library and accept it on behalf of the Library staff, who will be heartened by that recognition.

I like the concept of the new structure because I think that it will more accurately define the area of work with which we are involved. The five sub-committee structure has been woolly and inconclusive, indeterminate and generally speaking not satisfactory. Sir Robin Ibbs makes the point in his report that at the main Services Committee the only people able to contribute are the Members of the sub-committee who have an awareness of the issues involved. That means that for the most part the Services Committee is irrelevant. Therefore, it would be appropriate to increase the size of the sub-committees, or turn them into committees, with a head committee to co-ordinate and gather together the input of the other committees. To that extent, it is a tight operation which is capable of delivering service well from the point of view of hon. Members.

On the financial side, that would also have the effect of imposing on the other sectors the disciplines that we have used in the Library for some time, whereby we use the financial estimates of the Librarian as a mechanism for

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

studying priorities and the effectiveness of policy over the preceding year and for looking forward to the forthcoming year. It has been an effective mechanism for scrutiny.

My hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) spoke about the relationship between the Executive and Parliament. I am attracted to the concept whereby the Executive is even more separated from Parliament. The recommendation by Sir Robin Ibbs that the House of Commons Commission takes on board full responsibility is to be welcomed.

Reference has been made to the phase 1 Parliament street building. It may be frustrating to hon. Members, and it is certainly frustrating to me as I have been involved since its inception, that it has taken nearly eight years to get to the present stage. It is a miracle that it ever happened at all. We worked very hard under the able chairmanship of the late John Silkin to pull together the details, to get the proposal through the House, to wrap it all up and get it out to contract, but the dead hand of Treasury kept interfering and we had to cut back on this and that. Admittedly, we will have new accommodation, but it will not have the facility for information technology, the facility for document transfer between the two buildings or the subway concept, which would have been superseded by the Jubilee line changes anyway. Those points had to be trimmed back. The building is coming, but it is a miracle. I look forward enormously to the opening of the new research library which will be there.

I welcome the Ibbs report broadly, but I want to put down some markers. The first relates to the Refreshment Department, which has been mentioned in the debate. It is particularly frustrating. We are all, as consumers of food, enormously expert. We have a range of differing tastes, requirements and shapes. The subject of the Refreshment Department is fraught with difficulties.

I joined the Catering Sub-Committee before it had been restructured, when the interest payment on the overdraft was greater than the entire turnover for the year. It was a shambles. We had misunderstandings, as was indicated earlier in the debate; it was felt that the entire subsidy related to 600 Members when the Department actually feeds 3,500 people every day. It is a very difficult area in which to work. The Ibbs report has not taken on board that nicety.

When we started in 1979—I say "we" because I joined the Sub-Committee at the same time as my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Sir C. Irving), under whose able chairmanship it has been transformed over the last 11 years—we could get nothing done to improve facilities for staff, for catering, for equipment or for hon. Members. The Property Services Agency always said that that was impossible and that we did not have the money. Things were restructured and changes made in 1980. The staff element was taken on board and the Refreshment Department is now subject to a vote in the House as though it was any other works canteen. We were then free to adopt a trading policy that would develop certain resources. Armed with those resources we were able to go to the Parliamentary Works Officer, the PSA and the relevant Minister at the Department of the Environment and say, "We have money from our surplus to be able to do this work. Where is yours?"

As a consequence of the restructuring, we have been able to undertake many changes. We forget what some of them were and some have never been seen or understood. Consider, for example, the £1 million or so that was spent on ventilation of the main kitchens. Ten years ago those kitchens were places where even galley slaves should not have worked—they were awful. Now they are a lot better. They are not the best, but goodness gracious me, improvements have been made. We have also improved the Tea Room, but I accept that there are still improvements to be made.

The frustrating thing is that we have been unable to achieve the improvement, that we want and for which my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham has been pressing for the past 10 years—improvements in the changing and rest room facilities for the staff. As the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North said, those facilities are still a disaster area. We must resolve that problem.

I am worried about the reference in the Ibbs report to this year's accounts and the £300,000 trading surplus. The inference is that, somehow or other, that surplus should go to the Commission because it could then carry the finance for the entire Palace of Westminster. If that happened, the emphasis of representations from Members to the Catering Sub-Committee would be for price reductions in services or for pegging the price of a cup of tea so that the surplus was reduced and we did not have to pass the money on. If that money was passed on, we might no longer be able to deploy it to good effect in the Refreshment Department. It might be used to sort out requirements in other parts of the House; after all, we are part of a system of conflicting requirements.

Ms. Walley: Although I accept what the hon. Gentleman said, does he agree that it is extremely important that the full accounting procedures of the Catering Sub-Committee should be published in more detail than at present?

Mr. Shepherd: I do not disagree. There is no reason why we should not have full accounting procedures for the Refreshment Department and for them to be published in whatever detail seems appropriate.

I am worried about the attitude of Members serving on the Catering Sub-Committee. If it was felt that any trading surplus could not be deployed for the benefit of the Refreshment Department, problems might arise. It is tempting to try to take that trading surplus because we obtain a good income from, for example, the kiosk. That was a marketing initiative developed to hold down prices for Members in the Members' Dining Room and for the Press Gallery.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North mentioned banqueting facilities. In 1980 we put up the price of the banqueting facilities—we almost doubled them and added in our own birthdays—to get a major contribution to the price that we needed to charge Members and staff for the services that we offered and that they could not avoid consuming.

I am worried that we may throw away the banqueting facility and other marketing initiatives which generate funds that can be properly and usefully deployed towards improvements and the provision of better standards of service and facilities for people employed for long hours in this place. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House

and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, who represents the Commission, should take account of that important point.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) was right to mention what I consider to be the curious inclusion of "parliamentary bodies" in the Ibbs report. Their presence is anomalous and there is no rhyme or reason for their inclusion except perhaps that the Treasury was interested in divesting itself of responsibility.

Mr. Anderson: I understand that the genesis of this proposal was a Treasury afterthought. It was a tidying operation undertaken by someone who did not know how such bodies operate, but who thought that their inclusion made a tidier administrative arrangement.

Mr. Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely valid point and it is interesting to have that confirmation. It could only have been a tidying up exercise as it is singularly inappropriate for the grant in aid to such bodies as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the British American Parliamentary Group and the History of Parliament Trust to be so included. They do not represent services provided to Members but are things that Members do while they are here. The purpose of the Ibbs report and our debate tonight should be the business of providing facilities and services to Members, and operating the Palace of Westminster. Therefore, it is totally anomalous to waste time even thinking about such groups. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will recognise the powerful point that I hope I have made.

I must stop now because I have spoken for longer than I meant to—I apologise. There is an opportunity to make changes that could be helpful to the Palace of Westminster and Parliament, so we should get on with the job.

9.6 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) reminded us that we have gradually taken over aspects of the royal palace. We owe a debt to people such as Charlie Pannell and Arthur Bottomley, who has already been mentioned. I foresee my hon. Friends the Members for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) coming within that tradition. They are right to goad us and enliven our debates as they do.

I am a little worried about a number of issues, and will rapidly outline them in staccato fashion. Has the relationship between the Lords and the Commons, particularly in respect of the building, been satisfactorily determined by the proposals? It is not within our powers. It is morally right and necessary that, if we do not come within the health and safety at work regulations and the provisions for food safety for a good reason, we parallel them as far as practically possible. Nothing else can be acceptable, and that must be achieved within a certain timetable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North mentioned our staff. Why is there still no creche in the Palace of Westminster? I do not understand why, and perhaps the Lord President will tell us why when he winds up. If there is room for a television control room and other facilities, surely we can provide a creche, because the lack of one affects our staff more than us. I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the Crown Agents building which is almost opposite the Victoria Tower. I am not sure of that magnificent building's future, but it might be useful for a number of different purposes.

I am glad to see you, Mr. Speaker, back in the Chair, and I shall revert to the point I made when I interrupted my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South, who —I am sorry to say—is not present. As he rightly said, it would be intolerable for the Clerk or the Speaker to have to spend a lot of time on administrative matters—I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South is entering the Chamber on cue. I do not know the amount of time they spend on such issues, and I would not be so impertinent as to ask, but, with the ever-widening responsibilities of you, Mr. Speaker, and the Clerk, I guess that it is happening more often. Decisions are often passed up, and we must, to a degree, protect you from that. To an extent, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South—he is fundamentally right. However, the final judgments of priorities and how things work must be related to the prime Officers of the House—Mr. Speaker and the Clerk. They must advise Members on priorities or make decisions when Members devolve responsibility to the Commission or those Officers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South was wrong when he responded to my intervention. I said that it all happens here in the Chamber; my hon. Friend said that it did not. It may not happen, through the usual channels or in relation to people of influence, but it happens here de jure. My hon. Friend mentioned the powers of the various services committees and sub-committees. The powers that they have, or might not have in future—and which I wish them to retain—are determined by motions on the Order Paper discussed on the Floor of the Chamber.

All sorts of measures go through late at night or at about 3.30 pm at the beginning of public business that deserve examination. They should take place here, and if they do not happen here in fact, they happen de jure. This debate is an example. The Floor of this Chamber is the hub of a many-spoked wheel and the Standing Orders correspond to the ball-bearings in the hub. It must be for the House and its Officers to make the final decisions on priorities to do with services, which provide us with the means of proper debate and decision.

All this may mean some comprehensive financial organisation—but there are dangers, such as those mentioned in connection with the Refreshment Department. And what about *Hansard*? Is it to be run as a service to Members or as a service to democracy? If the latter, how far should it be subsidised? I remember after the war being able to pick up *Hansard* on bookstalls for half a crown—quite a lot then. Nowadays one probably could not find it on a bookstall and it would certainly cost much more than half a crown, but with the televising of the House, *Hansard* will be important. All our papers, such as Command Papers, which are technically papers of the House, are also public papers, so we are paying not just for the House but for democracy.

Despite what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said, Ibbs will turn the five Committees into consumer relations Committees instead of Select Committees of this House, armed with all their powers——

Mr. John Garrett: Hear, hear.

Mr. Spearing: I am glad to hear that my hon. Friend agrees—as, I believe, does the Leader of the House. The Committee may have the powers to investigate and advise the Commission as at present, but their importance should not be diminished, and I am a little uneasy about the future suggested for them.

The services of the House are vital for us to do our democratic job. All too easily, we take for granted the enormous amount of work that goes on behind the scenes in the offices of all our chief Officers and Departments, and of our staff, who perhaps serve us most and are therefore the most deserving. I hope to hear about a creche from the Leader of the House.

9.12 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I apologise to the House for the fact that I was unable to be here for the opening speeches.

I welcome this report. When the questionnaire arrived on my desk last summer, I fell on it with cries of joy. At long last, I thought, someone had realised that there are some problems with this place and with the way it works. I filled it in with great relish and gusto.

I had to ask myself what the House of Commons Commission was, because I did not know. No one told me. One of the first things that I learned when I entered this place was that no one tells anyone anything. One has to ask, especially in the Tea Room, where one might hope to find an answer. It seemed to me that these problems arose because no one was responsible for telling anyone anything.

I also had to ask myself what on earth the Services Committee was and how it interacted with the Commission. I found some answers, believe it or not, in the report by Sir Robin Ibbs.

There seems to be no chain of command in the various services. To find out something, Members first have to find out which office deals with it, and then find their way to that office. They then have to discover who in that office can deal with their problem. The trouble is, they do not know who that is. When I first came here, I knew only one Clerk both by sight and by name, and that only because he was a member of the Chelsea reel club.

When I first arrived, I was given a book with the splendid title, "Manual of Procedure in the Public Business". I was told to take it away and read it, but I am afraid that Jeffrey Archer got in my way.

For example, I know that the Librarian is called Dr. David Menhennet. He must be an efficient man, because the Library is one of the best-run services in the House. I have sometimes thought that I would like to send Dr. Menhennet a Christmas card to compliment him and his staff on the wonderful job they do, but I have been inhibited from doing so, because I do not know who Dr. Menhennet is or what he looks like.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is the hon. Gentleman's fault.

Mr. Summerson: Let me develop the point.

There seems to be a great divide between Members and those who supply the services. For example, if the hon. Gentleman goes to the far end of the Tea Room at lunch time, he will be glared at by any number of people who reckon it is their territory. Could he put his hand on his heart and say that he knows who they are, from which Department they come and what job they do?

Mr. Banks: Yes.

Mr. Summerson: The hon. Gentleman has been here longer than I have.

Mr. Banks: Yes, and I will stay here longer than the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Summerson: Under the heading "Findings" paragraph (d) says:

> "The mechanisms for getting things done are not sufficiently clearly understood or used. Many Members seem ignorant of the routes that are available for solving problems or achieving change within the House."

I was grateful for those lines.

I move swiftly to the subject of offices. Offices in this place can be summed up in one word—disgraceful. When one first arrives in the House, the allocation system seems strange. I was told that, not only was there a large and formidable lady in the Serjeant at Arms' Department to be propitiated, but having propitiated her, I then had to propitiate a Whip of my own party, and I did not know whom to go to first.

I would like a fax of my own. One would think that in these days that was not too much to ask, but my office is so small that I have nowhere to put one. Two days ago, I had to send a fax to someone in Saudi Arabia on behalf of a constituent. I had to go to the post office in Central Lobby and send my fax. I was presented with a bill for £9·20 and I then had to return to my office and fill in a form in order to recover the cost from the Fees Office.

I have many more points to make, but unfortunately time is running out. I just want to touch on catering. The catering staff do a good job in difficult circumstances. To give one example, I was in the Tea Room just before lunch time when I saw the lettuce arriving. The lettuce arrived in a yellow plastic bucket half full of water. The lettuce was plucked out of the bucket and deposited in a bowl. When I took some out to put on my plate, I found that everything else was swimming in half an inch of water. I do not blame the staff: that was entirely due to the disgraceful kitchen facilities in this place.

I approve the report and its conclusions. This place is a museum, and that is how it should be in future. We need a brand new facility, and we should leave this place to the Americans and the Japanese.

9.17 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I love following the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson). I am surprised that he did not add as one of his demands at the end of his speech a request for a tape so that he could mime to it in the Chamber. If he wants to turn this place into a museum, there will always be a treasured place for him in it, resembling as he does Mr. Neville Chamberlain's parliamentary private secretary.

There is an atmosphere of surrealism in having this debate while all hell is breaking loose in the Gulf. If this debate does not convince Saddam Hussein that we have all taken leave of our collective senses and frighten the life out of him, I do not know what will. But I do not think that we should be in any way critical of the fact that we are having such a debate. It is not an escape from reality, rather a way of making the point that we need resources in

this place to enable us to do our job efficiently and to represent the people who send us here.

There is something very therapeutic about having a good whinge, but we must go further. I was struck by the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley), who said that the problem has existed for far too long and that it is time to stop talking and do something about it. I did not fall on the MORI opinion poll with glee and delight, as did the hon. Member for Walthamstow. I do not know what he does for thrills, but filling in MORI opinion polls does not get me too worked up or excited, and perhaps it was remiss of me not to complete that questionnaire. However, when I saw the results, I realised that was unnecessary, because my right hon. and hon. Friends adequately represented my own views. It did not need an opinion poll to discover that 66 per cent. of Members of Parliament think that the accommodation available for them and the staff in this place is absolutely appalling. We know that is true, because we experience it on a day-to-day basis.

We are not asking for luxury suites, only for single offices in which we can work with a couple of staff, and perhaps hold meetings with one or two constituents at a time and talk privately about their personal matters and complaints. It is impossible to achieve privacy in this building. We are not asking for the moon when we make a request to be provided with single offices.

I share an office with my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), who is the shadow Arts Minister. In that one room, he accommodates a small army of assistants, and thanks to a generous £100,000 grant from Paul Hamlyn, my hon. Friend has the latest in super technology. I sometimes find it impossible to find a place at my own desk. The office looks rather like the Pentagon's headquarters for the Gulf action group, with all the lights flickering on and off.

I attempted to find out how I could obtain a single office, and did all the things that it says in the Ibbs report. I went to the Whips, and asked my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) what I should do to obtain one. I did not get very far. Finally, I said to him, "Ray, I will give you a hundred quid if you will let me have an office of my own." He looked at me with total disdain. I am not sure whether he did so because he was totally offended by my suggestion, or because he thought that the amount offered was ridiculously small. In any event, that cannot be the right way to go about securing a facility that should be the right of every Member of Parliament.

A new building is to be available shortly, but it will not be enough. It does not offer enough space to meet our requirements, although it is a handsome building and I commend the architects. That profession usually talks only about the need to construct new shapes, but that building is entirely in sympathy with those that surround it, and I commend the Services Committee, architects and builders concerned.

There is a vacant building available not a hundred miles from here, on the other side of the river, called County hall. Given that the preposterous proposal to turn it into a luxury hotel has hit the deck, is it not time to re-examine the possibility of using that building for our offices? The Services Committee considered that proposal in the past, but there was no chance of it being adopted because of the total opposition by the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher), when she was Prime Minister. Thankfully, we have thrown off that particular burden, and as that right hon. Lady is no longer Prime Minister, perhaps we can reconsider the prospect of using County hall, which could be connected to this place by an underwater travelator. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) laughs. I know that the members of my Front Bench can walk on water, but the rest of us would need to use a travelator.

Mr. Spearing: Or a ferry.

Mr. Banks: Except that I cannot see how we could use a ferry when we have only eight minutes to reach the Lobby. My hon. Friend is a cyclist and much healthier than I am, and he could probably manage that—but I do not fancy my chances.

I also think it is ludicrous that all Members of Parliament should be given the same research and secretarial allowances—which I agree are too small anyway—when they have disparate work loads. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South and myself represent constituencies that weigh the votes for the Labour party, and consequently work ourselves to death. I am sure that that is true also of the hon. Member for Walthamstow, though they do not weigh the votes for the Labour party in his constituency. In any event, we weigh our constituents' problems. It is preposterous that I and my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South get the same accommodation as someone who has nothing like the range or degree of problems that we have in Newham.

Every constituency should be examined and banded, and there should be a different way of paying allowances which takes into consideration the problems that hon. Members have within their constituencies—problems that need resources, space and staff to tackle them efficiently. That would not be for the greater glorification of the individual Member of Parliament, but to provide a service adequate to deal with constituents' problems, which is what they expect from their Members of Parliament.

I must sit down now because the Front Bench have demanded it. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am a loyal member of the party and I always obey the Front Bench. I must warn my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) that there is a feeling afoot that the Front Benches of the Government in office and of the Government in waiting do not want Back Benchers to operate efficiently because they become a nuisance for the Government. They deliberately deprive us of the resources that we all know we desperately need. The time for whingeing is over. Now is the time for action, and I invite my hon. Friend to go to the Dispatch Box and to tell us what the next Labour Government will do.

9.25 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): This has certainly been a lively and amusing debate and has been mainly to the point. We cannot say that about all the debates which take place in this Chamber. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for setting out clearly the background findings and recommendations of the Ibbs report at the beginning of the debate. Like him, I am a member of the Commission; I thought that I had better get that on the record at the outset.

Because of the very serious events in the Gulf, these matters may hardly be at the forefront of many hon. Members' minds, and of even fewer of our constituents' minds. However, they are relevant to us and to the people

[Dr. John Cunningham]

that we come here to represent. As most hon. Members know, the remit of the report concerns the management and decision-making structure for the services of the House, rather than the services themselves. That is what we asked Sir Robin Ibbs and his colleagues to consider. We thought that, if we got the decision-making process right, it was more likely, although not guaranteed, that we would get the services we need.

Within that narrow but important remit, the report contains a number of specific recommendations, and I hope that the House will support them all. I supported the review at all stages, and I expressed my thanks to Sir Robin and his team.

When the former Leader of the House—the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe)—approached me, I readily agreed that Sir Robin should be asked to conduct the inquiry. He was ably assisted by Donald Limon, John Collins, Diana Goldsworthy and John Woods. I know that they found that the House was full of interesting and well-informed people; I suspect that they found that one or two of them were Members of Parliament.

For some time, it has been evident, certainly to me—it has become more evident since I became shadow Leader of the House—that there has not been a coherent approach to the management of services and the problems that we face in the House. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) said, the House is not an aggressive legislature. I regret to say that, but it is true, and I have to inform my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that, if he wants the things that he is talking about, the first step is to elect a Government willing to concede more powers to the House of Commons. That is not easy to achieve, but it would certainly be one of my principal objectives.

Mr. Jopling: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the setting up of the departmental Select Committees as we know them has given more power to the House of Commons in the second half of the 20th century than anything else?

Dr. Cunningham: I am a supporter of departmental Select Committees, but I do not really regard the House as having reached the 20th century. We seem to have missed it out, and we shall be lucky if we make it into the 21st, judging by the way in which we conduct our affairs.

The Ibbs remit did not include making us more effective as Members of Parliament. That would have been an impossible task for some, but in any event it is a job that we must do for ourselves. If we do not challenge and scrutinise the Executive as effectively as we should, we ourselves should give thought to how we approach those activities.

The recommendations in the report are, however, a useful first step towards the development of a more coherent approach to the management of our affairs. I certainly believe that no proposal for reforming the House can progress without first addressing the need for an improved administrative framework and decision-making process. Whatever changes we want—and I share the aspirations of many of my hon. Friends and, indeed, Conservative Members—we shall never get to first base without an effective decision-making process.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed spoke of the role played by the former Leader of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East. Let me say again how important his role was, and how important the role of the present Leader of the House will be, in seeing the proposals through. The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked Sir Robin Ibbs to conduct this review, and his support and guidance as Leader of the House and a member of the Commission was unfailing.

The findings of the report, explored by a number of hon. Members, are a graphic illustration of the everyday problems and frustrations that face Members, Officers and staff who work in the Palace of Westminster. I have always recognised that it is a great privilege to be an elected Member of Parliament, but it is no big deal to have to work in the conditions available to us here. The MORI employees who carried out the research that provided some of the back-up for the report must have been wryly amused at some of the things that they discovered here. I found the research itself very useful, but I suspect that the researchers—with the exception of Bob Worcester, who knows this place very well—may have been not only amused but amazed by some of what they found and some of what Members tell them. The list is, of course, familiar to most of us.

At present, Members have no clear understanding of how the policy for services is decided. That is hardly surprising when, as we have heard, responsibilities have been divided between the Select Committee on House of Commons Services, the Leader of the House and the Commission itself. Members, particularly new Members, do not understand the mechanisms for getting things done. That favours what might be termed "those in the know" —and to be in the know in this place usually means having to spend an awfully long time here. The MORI work dramatically illustrates the point: only 14 per cent. of Members with three years' service or less described the House as a good or fairly good place in which to work. The figure rises to 50 per cent. in the case of Members with more than 20 years' service.

Although theoretically I belong to the group of those "in the know", with more than 20 years' service, I share the views of the group of newer Members who find this place inadequate, to say the least. The confusion felt by new Members is particularly familiar to me, because my party won a series of important by-elections last year, and since then I have often been called on for advice by my new colleagues and found them bemused—frequently dazed —by the arcane nature of the House's operations.

The umbrella role for the Commission proposed by the Ibbs report will, in my view, result in a better co-ordinated policy for improving services. I remind the House that we have many excellent and loyal staff here at Westminster. The report makes that clear when it says:

> "There is a reservoir of goodwill among staff, derived from a strong desire to serve Members, which could be directed to greater advantage."

The truth is that, although we have many excellent people, they too are frustrated by their inability to give a more efficient and effective service to Members.

When I first came here in June 1970, I was given the distinct impression by some people—I do not intend to name them, and they have all retired now—that this place was not really run for the benefit and convenience of

Members. It seemed to have an entirely different purpose in their minds. Fortunately, little of that attitude remains today.

The proposed transfer to the Commission of responsibility for the Parliamentary Works Office may have profound effects upon the industrial staff in the House. In that regard, bearing in mind the good will to which I have referred, consultation with those people through their trade unions and existing machinery will be of obvious importance and significance if we are to achieve the acceptance of the changes that will be essential to their success.

In addressing the attempt to co-ordinate policy for services, it is also important to ensure that it is backed up by requisite increases in funds available to the Commission. I agreed with a great deal of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South in what I took to be a privileged preview of his imminent book. I look forward to reading the other chapters when he eventually publishes it.

However, I disagreed with him on one important thing —financial control. Central to the report is a clear statement that, if a disagreement arises with the Treasury over the budget, in the last resort it should be resolved by the House. We have argued and fought long and hard in the Commission on behalf of our colleagues to get that agreed by the Treasury, and I think that it is very important. It is set out in annexe F of the report, and it ensures that, in the last resort, if there is no agreement, hon. Members can decide on expenditure.

The Ibbs report suggests that there can be no confidence in the financial management systems of the House as they presently exist. Hon. Members have little confidence that the sums spent are appropriate to the needs of the House or that they are well spent. The report's proposals to reform the Board of Management to provide it with an enhanced corporate management role and to appoint a director of finance are important to the delivery of better services. The report's recommendations, which I touched upon earlier, are an important first step—only a first step—to undertaking the gamut of wider reforms needed to make the House an effective national legislature for the 21st century. Even after these reforms, the House of Commons will remain, to quote Sir Robin, a "complex anachronism".

I share the view of the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) that this building will never be adequate to provide the services and facilities that a modern legislature requires. I hope that cross-party consensus on these issues will give us the sort of springboard we need to come to grips in a sustained and prolonged way with the need for wider reform of practices, services and procedures in the House.

The Ibbs report has already kindled debate among Members, particularly Opposition Members but generally throughout all parties, and in the national press on the need for fundamental reform. I recognise that there may be potential conflicts between the role of historic and senior Officers of the House and the new management proposals set out in the report, and the Commission will need to address them.

Hon. Members referred to the lack of a properly co-ordinated information technology service to members. The computer Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on House of Commons Services, which I have the honour to chair, produced a report that made excellent recommendations. It was a unanimous report, and I hope that we shall soon have an opportunity to approve it. I ask the Leader of the House to find time for that, so that, at last, we can begin to tackle that job.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) said, our constituents—who may be elderly and may have travelled for hours to get here—sometimes must queue for hours in the rain or freezing cold. I know that we are addressing that, but it is long overdue. We must address other issues, such as the lack of child care facilities for staff and Members and having to pay to telephone the institutions of the European Community, whereas its members can call us at the expense of their own Parliament.

As the research in the Ibbs report shows, accommodation is the issue that exercises most Members. Their responses are particularly disturbing. Almost 60 per cent. of Members describe the House as a fairly poor place in which to work. Conditions for our staff are even worse. Accommodation is unacceptable and would be seen as such in almost any other institution in the country. Few Members cannot tell at least one horrendous anecdote.

We have the problem of a historic, evocative, architecturally magnificent building, which, internally, will never be adequate to fulfil the increasing demands that are being placed on it. The make-do-and-mend job of buildings here and buildings there will not resolve the problem. I was attracted by what my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, and we should reconsider that.

I commend the Ibbs report as a positive approach to the problems and as a good first step. I hope that it will be quickly implemented.

9.42 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John MacGregor): This is mainly an opportunity for colleagues who are not Members of the Commission to express their views on the Ibbs report, so I have agreed to be brief.

I welcome the debate. The fact that I have arranged it so soon after the publication of the report shows the importance that I attach to the subject and my desire to get on with implementing the report in the light of the general reaction of the House to it.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has outlined the history. It is no criticism of previous reforms of the House to say that it is now necessary to bring our arrangements into line with the needs of the 1990s, both in terms of achieving a modern management structure and of ensuring—here I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd)—that we take advantage of modern facilities to ensure the best practicable service to Members and that we, as Members, carry out our services in the best way for the public at large.

That is the general purpose of the report, but there are two particular reasons why it is important that we give priority to implementing it. First, many hon. Members, and certainly we as a Government, have been urging industry, commerce, the professions and many others to modernise their systems and practices and have frequently legislated to that effect. It must be right that we put our own house in order in the same way.

[Mr. John MacGregor]

Several detailed comments on issues, frustrations and dissatisfactions have been expressed. I share several of them, particularly about accommodation. As the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, the report is on decision-making processes, management structures and financial disciplines, not the detailed issues that the Committees will have to deal with. I agree with the hon. Member that we must get those right first.

I shall preface my second point by referring to the remarks of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed on gamekeepers turned poachers. I am not sure that his remarks were entirely apt, given the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) that the parliamentary bodies might be better if they were still under the control of the Treasury, which is more cost-conscious and tightfisted, rather than the House of Commons. It is important that we carry out our role as leader by fully recognising our responsibilities to the House. That also means that we should all be responsible in our approach. That is why I say with some diffidence, speaking as a former Chief Secretary, that my second point is that one of the Government's hallmarks has been to insist throughout our period in office that we should constantly strive to ensure value for taxpayers' money and to insist on cost effectiveness in our expenditure programmes.

At the same time, Parliament, through the Public Accounts Committee, the National Audit Office and the departmental Select Committees—not always consistently—insists that Departments and other public bodies conform to high standards of financial management and that they discharge their responsibility for spending taxpayers' money by putting strong emphasis on the need to obtain good value for money. That is what we are practising in the Ibbs' approach to the "next steps" programme in the civil service. It is right that we in the House should be prepared to practise what we preach. The Ibbs report gives us an appropriate blueprint.

That is the background and it is why I should like to join with those who congratulated and thanked my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Sir G. Howe) on the part that he played in grasping the issue as Leader of the House. As the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, the Ibbs committee was set up mainly because of my right hon. and learned Friend's initiative. As I was not a member of the Commission at the time, I believe that it is in order for me to compliment you, Mr. Speaker, and the other members of the Commission on taking on board so readily the need to make improvements and on carrying the initiative forward so fast. My right hon. and learned Friend asked me to apologise to the House for unavoidably not being able to be here, but he was specifically anxious to join me in paying a warm tribute to Sir Robin Ibbs and his team, who have done an admirable job not only in getting to the heart of the problems but in presenting their conclusions and recommendations so straightforwardly.

Some hon. Members expressed criticism of the Ibbs report. Of course, it is not a perfect answer, but the general view is that it is a considerable advance. We must bear in mind that Sir Robin Ibbs is a knowledgeable business man with experience in several major companies of the kind of work which he undertook for us. In the short time available, I should like to comment on some points and indicate the way in which we should go forward.

First, in taking up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), the new structure which is outlined is a much better one in enabling us to make a clear and proper distinction between the policy-making bodies and committees and the executive bodies of the House. I take brief issue—I fear that I must be brief because of the time—with the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who criticised some of the new Services Committee approaches. It is important to recognise that the new Finance and Services Committee will also be a consumer committee in the sense that it will represent Members of the House in making policy recommendations and so on. It has a representational and policy-making role.

I welcome the recommended changes for the Committee structure. The shift from being semi-administrative bodies to more policy-oriented bodies is right, because it separates Members' responsibility for decisions about what services should be provided from heads of Departments' responsibilities for carrying out those decisions. This will provide much needed clarity and a more effective and responsive decision-making structure.

Secondly, I share Sir Robin Ibbs' conviction that appointing the financial director to install sound financial systems and management and, in time, a single House of Commons budget under the Commission's control is fundamental to improving the House's administration. Although the timetable proposed by Sir Robin Ibbs is challenging, I am sure that all involved will do their best to achieve it. This will provide the Commission with the necessary information to reach sensible decisions and, by bringing together responsibility for resources and responsibility for expenditure, will give the Commission the authority that it needs to exercise fully its role for managing the services of the House. That is an important change.

I am sorry that I do not have time to deal with all matters, but I want to commend statements in the report about accommodation. Of course, we all have our criticisms of accommodation——

Mr. John Garrett *rose*——

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have time to go into the hon. Gentleman's point now—*[Interruption.]* I do not think so. Accommodation was seen in many ways to be the key to many complaints in the House. It is important to concentrate on what the report said about it. Of course, we all know the constraints and the difficulties under which people have had to operate. The important point is that the House cannot take informed and responsible decisions about accommodation unless it is responsible for the works programme and its funding. The importance of parliamentary works is well taken in the Ibbs report.

The approach that Sir Robin suggests, involving the development of a 10 to 15-year rolling programme on which expenditure provision and estimates will be based, will assist the House to order its priorities and demonstrate value for money. If will provide the opportunity to avoid any unreasonable peaks of expenditure and, through the agreement of expenditure programme estimates with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, will allow the House to give full regard, as it should, to the general public

expenditure climate in any year. Annex F is an important step forward. I have, of course, discussed the matter with the Chief Secretary and I can confirm, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed said, that the Government accept annex F as the basis for taking this forward.

Many of our accommodation problems will take time and they are immense. The problems of space and of the availability of space are a key part of them. To be sure of getting the right results, it is vital that there should be a proper long-term plan and that, once funding is obtained, we stick to it. The House will have to acquire professional competence to reach sensible decisions about what is needed and that is where the appointment of a works director is so important.

Mr. John Garrett: Controlled by the Government?

Mr. MacGregor: Under the control of the House.

In the last minute, I want to refer briefly to how I see matters being taken forward. I have already shown my clear support for the proposals in general and the agreement of the Government as a whole to them. There is, of course, a great deal of detail still to be sorted out, which the Commission will have to do, and a number of the comments made tonight are helpful. We will certainly take them on board and take into account the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling).

There has been a general suggestion of a desire to get on now with the thrust of the report. Two of the first crucial moves will be the recruitment and appointment of the director of finance and of the director of works. Following that, I want the changes in the Committee structure put in place as soon as possible. Subject to the constraints of the parliamentary timetable, I hope that we can get agreement to the changes to the relevant Standing Orders towards the end of the current Session of Parliament so that the new arrangements will be ready for the 1991-92 Session.

I want to tell the House briefly that the recommendations in the report are now also being considered in another place. My right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Privy Seal has informed me that there is little doubt that the other place will wish to co-operate with us in any proposals that we seek to implement.

The report comes at a time when there is much change in the management structures of many different organisations—change frequently brought about, as my hon. Friend the Member for Havant pointed out, by the possibilities of new technology. There is an increasing feeling among hon. Members, which I share, that services for visitors, for Members and for members of staff need to be substantially updated and improved. It is right that we should be getting the House into the right shape, operationally, organisationally and physically, for all the tasks that it will have to perform in the 1990s and beyond. This report and its proposals provide an excellent vehicle for doing just that.

It is worth remembering that the ideas in the report stem largely from the views put forward by many who work in the House. I agree with the hon. Member for Copeland. The changes will be a great improvement. If they work—I believe that they can—they will benefit everyone. The sense of the House has been a desire to get on with the changes in the management systems so that we can achieve the improvements that we seek. In that sense, I welcome our debate and I hope that we can get on with the implementation of the report.

9.52 pm

Mr. Beith: With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I shall answer some of the points that the Leader of the House was unable to fit into his remarks and to speak on behalf of the Commission.

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) pointed to reservations about whether the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and other groups that are now funded from the Treasury should continue to be funded in that way or transferred to the House. There was some anxiety about such a change. My feeling is that, in principle, it is desirable for a body representing Parliament to be funded by Parliament rather than by the Executive and that the particular status of the House, with its freedom from cash limits, might, in some cases, be to the advantage of those bodies. However, I recognise that it is a matter of legitimate concern to long-established bodies and the Commission is not trying to push them around. It would be very willing to continue the discussions that are already taking place on that and to proceed only on the basis of a great deal of further discussion where necessary.

The hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett), who has had a long interest in these matters, revealed himself to be—as we all knew he was—a re-advocate of the Compton report of 1974. The proposals in that report were rejected, in important respects, by hon. Members at the time in the form of the Bottomley commission; in particular, the proposal for a chief executive was rejected then. Interestingly, it has now been rejected not by Members of Parliament, but by an outside man with business experience and by his team. They came to the conclusion that, although such a proposal might have been appropriate in a body primarily responsible for delivering services to the community, such as a Government Department or a business, it was not appropriate for the House with its particular responsibility for legislation, and for supervising and questioning the Government. He regarded the federal management structure as more appropriate. He reached that conclusion only after examining the way in which the House operated, and his comments on the matter are bound to be influential.

The hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) supported the main Ibbs recommendations for the same reasons as I did—that the House, not the Government, should be in control of the services that it needs. His interest in technology assessment is well known and often argued. I think that he could advance his case better were responsibility more clearly focused. In the end, it will be for the House to decide whether the facilities that he wants should be funded by the House, on the scale that he and other hon. Members recommend. The proposals in the Ibbs report provide a much better mechanism for giving advice to the Commission on such matters than is currently available to it.

I welcome the zeal and enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) and I hope that they will not be blunted by experience of the long-established institutions and traditions of this place. Such zeal and enthusiasm could be channelled more effectively under a system whereby it was clear who was

[Mr. Beith]

responsible for getting something done. I take seriously what the hon. Lady said about working conditions, hygiene, cleaning and environmental health.

I did not say that Crown immunity was too complicated a subject with which to deal; I merely said that it was too complicated a subject for me to give an off-the-cuff explanation of precisely how the brief summary that we were given was inaccurate and misleading. Although the matter is complicated, it is important and should be dealt with. With other members of the Commission, I continue to seek further consideration of it and to ensure that, in any case, we act in accordance with the restrictions to which we would be subject if we did not have certain elements of Crown immunity.

The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) has much experience of the advisory committee approach from his work on the Library Sub-Committee. I was very interested in his comments and in his support for the Ibbs proposals on the basis of his long experience of our committee structure. His comments about the Refreshment Department will certainly be taken seriously when we consider the Touche Ross report on the future of that Department.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred to the participation of another place. That matter is still under discussion and must clearly depend on decisions made in the other place. He referred to stationery and to the massive increases in the price of House of Commons papers in which the general public are interested. That is something over which, at the moment, we have no control. One of the merits of the proposals is that in future these matters will have to be decided by the House. We will still have to have regard to cost considerations. They will not disappear. The cost of printing will not evaporate when it becomes the responsibility of the House. But at least it will be a matter for the House to decide in a way which has not been possible hitherto—as is the case with some of the other matters discussed.

The hon. Member for Newham, South also made a more general point about Committees. Their importance will continue, but the subject Select Committees should not attempt to manage. A hopeless confusion of minds and responsibilities will be created if Committees of hon. Members who seek better services become, whether by accident or design, a feature of management. That will mean that managers will not take responsibility; they will not be encouraged to exercise responsibility and will not develop their ability to do so.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) kindly owned up to being one of those who do not know much about these things. He illustrated well the frustrations that many Members feel which the proposals go some way to address.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) made me think that I had better get my diving suit ready for travelling on the underwater travelator that he has in mind. The issues that he raised ranged more widely than the subject of the Ibbs report.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made clear his support for the proposals on behalf of the Opposition. He talked about his own experiences with new by-election victors. I won a by-election in 1973. My seat was one of a series of by-election gains made by my party, the result of which was the increasing overcrowding of a very small room which we shared with my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith)—another of the by-election victors. I am sure that the House can imagine the increasing compression that occurred in the small broom cupboard that had been found to accommodate us.

The Leader of the House expressed the Government's support for the proposals. I am grateful for the way in which he and his predecessor have pursued the matter and supported what is, without question, a shift in responsibility from the Executive to the House.

This has been a useful debate.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Will the hon. Gentleman be so kind as to say what is the next step?

Mr. Beith: The Leader of the House has gone most of the way to explaining what needs to be done and has given a timetable for implementation. Many of the proposals on the management side will be pursued by an implementation officer from among the senior staff of the House. Arrangements are being made to appoint them, as has been said this evening.

The debate has been helpful in giving the proposals a fair wind and I hope that they will go ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Report to the House of Commons Commission on House of Commons Services (House of Commons Paper No. 38).

CENSUS (CONFIDENTIALITY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time tomorrow.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Ian Stewart be added to the Committee of Public Accounts.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Homelessness

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

10 pm

Mr. Edward O'Hara (Knowsley, South): I wish to take this opportunity further to draw the attention of the House to a subject which had a poignant topicality just before Christmas because of its biblical connotations—homelessness. After Christmas the problem has not gone away and I feel that it should be kept before us.

The genesis of my desire to bring homelessness to the attention of the House was a question to the Minister for Housing and Planning about the statistics of homelessness. The issue raised in my question was never resolved. No one knows how many homeless people there are in Britain. The official statistics published for the Department of the Environment record only homeless households which apply to and are accepted by local authorities. Many do not qualify to be accepted, including people without children and under retirement age. Non-priority groups are at least as great in numbers as priority groups, so one can double the official statistics of 120,000 homeless households. That is the figure for 1989. If one accepts that two thirds of homeless families have dependent children and that the average household consists of three people, it becomes clear that the official statistics involve approximately 300,000 people. If one adds in those who are not accepted by local authorities, the figure rises to 500,000. That is the number of people who became homeless in 1989.

The problem is growing. Ten years ago the official figure was 53,000. The average annual rate of increase in homelessness acceptances between 1976 and 1988—again according to Department of the Environment statistics—was 8 per cent. for London but 16 per cent. for other metropolitan districts. Two conclusions can be drawn: first, the curve is upwards and, secondly, homelessness is a national problem. We should remember that those are only the official statistics recorded by the Department of the Environment.

I wish to consider who are the homeless people, where they are, why they are homeless and the cost of keeping them without homes. I shall then examine some of the initiatives taken and conclude by suggesting other initiatives that might be effective. The homeless are generally people on low income or no income. They are vulnerable groups such as the migrant unemployed who move to the cities for work but are unable to find homes and people who suffer from discrimination in the private rented sector such as families with small children, pregnant women, single parents and ethnic minorities. Many such people can be found in the official statistics, but many others cannot. The unofficial statistics include victims of the present system of welfare benefits such as 16 to 17-year-olds who do not qualify for benefits. Young people receive benefits on a sliding scale based on age, but, of course, rents are not based on a sliding scale.

The unofficial figures also include people of all ages who are in a Catch 22 situation. They cannot afford the deposit on accommodation because benefits are no longer paid in advance and it is difficult to claim benefits if one has no address. Let us not forget the social inadequates, not least the pitiful cohort of mentally disturbed who are discharged on to the streets without proper support. Huge numbers of these latter groups do not show up in the official statistics. There is also the phenomenon of the 1980s, and particularly the late 1980s, the mortgage defaulters whose number has quintupled over the past 10 years from approximately 20,000 to over 100,000 per annum. That is who they are.

Where are they? Those who are fortunate to be provided with accommodation are, in large numbers, in temporary accommodation of various kinds, such as hostels, short-life properties, mobile homes, bed-and-breakfast accommodation and, perhaps the most fortunate, in properties leased by local authorities from the private sector. That is the private sector leasing group to which I shall refer as PSL. I shall address further remarks to the bed-and-breakfast and PSL groups. Those not provided for find shelter either in overcrowded circumstances in the homes of family or friends, frequently dossing on floors—they include large numbers not counted in the official statistics—or, as we see if we go not far from the Chamber, they live rough on the streets.

Why are those people homeless? The simple answer is that there is a lack of accommodation for rent at a price which they can afford. One feature which most of them have in common is that they cannot contemplate purchasing accommodation. The statistics for rented accommodation as a proportion of the total housing stock are interesting. In 1981 there were 6·6 million public sector rented units; in 1990 there were only 5·5 million. In the private sector in 1981 there were 2·4 million rented units; in 1990 there were only 1·7 million. Admittedly, there has been a small rise in the housing association rented sector, from 456,000 in 1981 to 642,000 in 1990, but it is pitifully small and not enough to bridge the gap.

The most important contributing factor has been the huge number of council homes taken out of the stock under the right-to-buy legislation and the fact that councils have been prevented from using most of their capital receipts to build new council houses. National Economic Development Office statistics show that in 1980 council new starts were 41,000, complemented by 15,000 housing association new starts; in 1990 the total has gone down to 24,000, composed of 8,000 council new starts and 16,000 housing association new starts. The figures show a small but inadequate increase in housing association provision. The projections for 1992 are even more gloomy—a pitiful 3,000 new starts in the council sector and 2,000 in the housing association sector.

There is a cost in all this homelessness. First, there is a monetary cost. The Department of the Environment calculation for keeping a family in bed-and-breakfast accommodation as compared with building a new council house shows that in London the cost of a new build is £7,400 while the cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation is £11,315 per family. In other metropolitan districts, such as Knowsley, South, the difference is even more significant; the cost of a new build on average is £3,200 while the cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation is £9,490. Those are the Department's own statistics at 1988 prices.

Only this month the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, a reputable body, produced figures for the net cost per head of population of keeping people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. It went up from 83p in 1988-89 to £1·50 in 1989-90, an increase of 80 per cent. The same set of statistics shows that the total net expenditure on homelessness in 1989-90 was equivalent to

[Mr. Edward O'Hara]

£2·79 per head of population or, if translated into the cost per charge payer, £3·79. Some estimates suggest that the cost per charge payer could rise to £24 in London. All bets are off on this, of course, while the poll tax is still in the massage parlour.

I have listed the monetary costs of homelessness, but there is also a human cost. I recommend to the House two documents—"A Crying Shame", which concentrates mainly on the effects of homelessness on children and has been produced by the London Boroughs Association, and "Homeless Families and their Health", which was produced jointly by the Health Visitors Association and a committee of the British Medical Association. There is also much anecdotal evidence of damage to physical and mental health caused by homelessness and the dangers posed to the safety of children when in temporary accommodation. There is also evidence of a drift into crime and prostitution, both male and female, among young people caught in the homelessness trap. People who have no accommodation or live in inadequate accommodation often become victims of crime. Those human costs are also translated into further monetary costs when one calculates the demands that they produce on the welfare services and the health service.

There have been a number of Government initiatives. The document produced by Shelter, "No New Homes", tabulates 10 such initiatives from 1986 through to 1993. Credit must be given to the Government for those initiatives, but, welcome though they are, unfortunately they are often inadequate. The Government's own welfare benefit system as now structured compounds the problem. A series of discreet initiatives do not add up to an adequate and coherent policy on homelessness.

The estate action scheme was never adequate in scale and represented, not new money, but money top-sliced from the reduced housing investment programmes. It was also subject to task force criteria which did not necessarily meet local housing needs.

In December the autumn statement included a seemingly generous statement from the Minister for Housing and Planning of £81 million to housing associations to provide hostel and long-term accommodation in London. That money will have some effect, but only in London.

Private sector leasing was first limited by the Government to 10 years and then to three years. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 resulted in those leasing arrangements being set against borrowing approvals. In October 1990 the hon. Member for Worcestershire South (Mr. Spicer), then Minister for Housing and Planning, announced changes in the amount of subsidy to local authorities with the result that local authorities now tend to opt for bed-and-breakfast accommodation that attracts a higher subsidy. Outside London such accommodation does not attract a higher subsidy and any differences in costs must be passed on by the local authorities in higher rentals or on to the hard-pressed poll tax payer.

I have suggested that private sector leasing is preferable to bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and in many ways it is, as the problems associated with bed-and-breakfast accommodation are well-known. However, at least monitoring procedures exist for such accommodation. No such procedures operate for private sector leasing, but it should be remembered that short-term leasing of that sort still represents temporary accommodation and that it varies tremendously in quality. Guidelines and systems must be introduced to ensure the enforcement of quality.

What should be done? First, there should be a significant change in attitude. We must recognise that homelessness is a national problem and not one that merely affects London. It should also be recognised that recent initiatives have been ad hoc and marginal in their effect. There is also a need to face up to the scale of the problem and a serious attempt should be made to assess it. Local authorities should be allowed to play their proper role in co-operation with, and complementary to, other agencies in solving that problem. If we consider those implications, we see that a number of positive measures can be taken.

The code of guidance on homelessness should be strengthened in a number of ways on which I do not have the time to elaborate. We should extend the priority groups, and in particular strengthen provision for children. The code should be made statutory. We should not allow local authorities to be deemed to have discharged their responsibilities by providing temporary accommodation of various sorts. There should be a further look at the welfare benefit system to eliminate some of the anomalies that I mentioned earlier.

More money must be allocated to the local authorities and housing associations, not top-sliced, as hitherto, so that the limited initiatives taken so far can be taken further. The restrictions on private sector leasing, apart from those on quality control, should be revoked.

There are also a number of initiatives to be considered that need not cost money. We could freeze the rents-into-mortgages scheme until it can be seen that the crisis of homelessness is on the way to being solved. We could have a mortgages-into-rents scheme rather than let people lose their homes. The sale of council houses on the open market could be restricted where it can be shown that there is a problem of homelessness in the district. Most importantly, the embargo preventing local authorities from using more of the £7·3 billion capital receipts that have accrued since the right-to-buy legislation was introduced should be lifted. That extra money could be used for a crash programme, including using local authority new stocks, bringing back into use the thousands of voids in the public sector that need renovation before they can be occupied and purchasing similar voids, in whatever condition, in the private sector.

I make a special plea for a step that could be taken without any cost, and for which I understand there are moves afoot elsewhere: the repeal of the Vagrancy Act 1824. It contains nothing that is not covered by some other Act. Its repeal would mean that those who, at present, suffer the tragedy of being homeless and living rough on the streets would not be classed as outside the law and subject to the harassment that that entails.

The crisis of homelessness can be solved with an injection of money—that is necessary. But how much could be achieved with just a change of attitude and a little imagination? In the words of the document produced by the London Boroughs Association, which addresses itself particularly to the plight of homeless children, "It is a crying shame."

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tim Yeo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) on his success in obtaining an opportunity so early in his parliamentary career to raise this important subject on the Adjournment of the House. I am only sorry that he resorted to the use of such misleading statistics and tendentious arguments. In the time available, I shall try to set the record straight on the Government's housing objectives and point to the considerable resources that we are devoting to housing over the next few years.

First and foremost, the Government are committed to ensuring that decent housing is within the reach of all families. The need to reduce homelessness underlies all our housing policy. It is good news that the total housing stock has risen by almost 2 million units since 1979—a fact conveniently and completely ignored by the hon. Gentleman in his selective reference to the reduction in the size of the rented sector. The ratio of homes to people has never been higher. Not only on Merseyside but across the country there is no overall housing shortage.

Most people want to own their own homes, and our policies, notably the right to buy, introduced in the face of consistent resistance from some local authorities, have brought home ownership within the reach of more people than ever before. The hon. Gentleman did not say whether he favours the expansion of home ownership, but his opposition to the rents-to-mortgages scheme, still at an embryonic stage, suggests that he shares the hostility to it which is so widespread in his party.

We recognise that in some parts of the country there is a need for additional subsidised housing where people cannot afford to buy or cannot find private rented accommodation. This need not mean building more council houses. There are alternative ways of increasing provision of low-cost housing. Instead of relying on local authorities as the sole monopoly provider, we have encouraged them to play an enabling role through sponsorship or housing association schemes and by promoting locally the expansion of the private rented sector.

Housing associations are now the main providers of new subsidised housing. We have reformed housing associations finance to allow the maximum use of private money to supplement public funds. The resources available to the Housing Corporation have been increased from £1·1 billion this year to over £2 billion by 1993-94. These measures will permit a sustained increase in output of subsidised housing by housing associations from 21,000 units last year to about 40,000 by 1993-94.

It is also important to ensure that this substantial increase in output is directed to the areas of greatest need. In 1989 we carried out a review of the method used to allocate Housing Corporation resources between regions.

The total housing public expenditure programme remains very large. Public expenditure on housing next year, including local authorities' self-financed expenditure from receipts, will amount to more than £8 billion. Of this, £3 billion will be available for local authority housing capital investment. The mechanism for regional allocation of resources, the general needs index, has been revised, allowing improved targeting on areas with homelessness pressures. Another £3·5 billion will go on subsidising current expenditure, including rent rebates. The remaining £1·5 billion goes to finance new house building by housing associations. This represents a very substantial public investment in housing, and is in addition to the £7 billion a year in tax relief to owner-occupiers.

The Government are frequently attacked for the decline in the overall size of the rented housing stock, in particular for the effects of allowing council tenants to buy their own houses. The crucial factor, however, is the total number of lettings to new tenants, which has remained relatively stable at about 500,000 per year. This is because there has been an increase in the rate of turnover of lettings, particularly in the private sector. In spite of sales of over 1 million council homes, total annual council lettings have fallen by only about 50,000 a year. It should also be recognised that many of those who bought their council houses would in any case have remained as tenants for many years.

Deregulation is also helping to slow down the decline of the private rented sector. Since we expanded the business expansion scheme in 1988 to cover companies specialising in residential lettings, about £550 million of new money has been raised from the private sector, which will provide about 10,000 houses. Housing benefit is, of couse, available, generally up to market rent levels, to assist those who have difficulty in meeting their full housing costs.

The hon. Member suggested that we should allow local authorities to spend more of their capital receipts from right-to-buy sales to finance new provision. This proposal, which we hear frequently, is based on a misunderstanding. The Government must regulate gross public expenditure, including spending from receipts, in the interests of managing the national economy. If authorities were allowed to use more of their receipts, the Government would have to reduce the total of new borrowing approvals and capital grants correspondingly to maintain the same level of total expenditure. This would mean that the pattern of expenditure would be determined mainly by where receipts happened to have arisen, and not necessarily in areas of greatest need.

The new rules that we have introduced require authorities to set aside part of their receipts for debt redemption, and the new power to take availability of receipts into account in making capital allocations means that about three quarters of authorities' total capital spending power derives from allocations made in accordance with assessed need, compared with only one third under the former system. So we are providing for more investment by the authorities that actually need it. Overall, we have reviewed housing policy, and we have taken steps to increase the supply of low-cost housing.

It is important to distinguish between those who are literally homeless—sleeping rough on the street without a roof over their head—and the larger number who are accepted as homeless by local authorities under the statutory provisions.

The most serious and acute symptom of homelessness is people sleeping rough, particularly in London. The Government are taking positive steps to deal with that. During the next three years, £96 million will be available to provide short-term direct access hostels for people on the streets and longer-term accommodation for people in existing hostels.

That initiative has been given a valuable impetus by the secondment to my Department of Nick Hardwick,

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

director of Centrepoint Soho, a leading voluntary body dealing with young homeless people who come to London from all parts of the United Kingdom.

The problem is at its worst in central London, so that is where we are concentrating initially. It is hard to be precise about numbers, but there are estimated to be between 2,000 and 3,000 people sleeping on London's streets, out of a total of about 5,000 throughout the country. In due course, we will consider how the initiative could be extended to other areas.

I have spent some time dealing with the initiatives that we are taking to reduce the number of people sleeping rough in London, but I must stress, since the hon. Member focused his remarks on this, that we are equally concerned to relieve the pressures that local authorities face in assisting homeless families who apply to them for help.

We are taking action on a number of fronts—to improve local management; to minimise the use of unsatisfactory bed-and-breakfast hotels by allocating funds to bring empty accommodation back into use; to improve advice services aimed at preventing homelessness; and to ensure that a more efficient and consistent homelessness service is offered by local authorities.

Those measures will help all those people who are seeking better accommodation, regardless of whether they fall within the definition of statutory homeless. My Department would certainly take issue with the hon. Gentleman's claim that the official homeless figures understate the nature of the problem. If anything, the reverse is true, as many of the people who are in that category are adequately housed at present.

I regret that the hon. Gentleman quoted, quite unquestioningly, some of the misleading statistics provided recently by CIPFA and Shelter about the relative cost of new building and the cost of bed and breakfast. CIPFA has acknowledged that some of the recently publicised figures that it produced were wrong.

The Government's review of the homelessness legislation was published in November 1989. It concluded that the legislation was doing the job intended by Parliament. But it recognised that there was room for improved management of stock and handling of homelessness by local authorities.

Unfortunately, many local authorities, including Knowsley, still have a poor record of making proper use of their housing resources. There are about 100,000 empty local authority dwellings—about 2·4 per cent. of the total stock. In Knowsley, the figure is 5·3 per cent. We are therefore encouraging better management by the introduction of mandatory performance indicators which will allow tenants to assess how good a job the authority is doing as a landlord.

Even with the optimum use of stock, there are some areas where authorities need additional resources to help them to meet their statutory obligations. We are therefore making available considerable sums in the worst pressed areas in London and the south-east. Our prime objective is to reduce the use of bed-and-breakfast hotels for families. Priority is being given to schemes to bring empty local authority and housing association properties back into use.

Additional allocations of £300 million are being made over this year and next—£227 million will go to local authorities and £73 million to housing associations. So far, approval has been given to schemes totalling £157 million, which should provide around 7,500 additional lettings. We are looking for a similar level of output from the resources available next year. Part of the additional homelessness allocation will also go in support of cash incentive grants to encourage better-off tenants to move into owner-occupation.

We are also funding a national homelessness advice service co-ordinated through citizens advice bureaux, with technical support from Shelter and the Shelter Housing Aid Centre. We have expanded support to individual projects run by the voluntary sector which provide practical advice and assistance to help single homeless find temporary and permanent accommodation. This year, £2 million will be made available, about half of which will go to the advice service.

This has been something of a whistle-stop tour of the main initiatives that we are taking forward to help relieve and reduce homelessness. As I have explained, the most difficult area of all is that of rough sleeping. It is our aim that assistance should be available to anyone willing to take advantage of it so that, eventually, no one need sleep without a roof over his head.

We are also deeply concerned about the increasing number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities and the number of families forced to live in temporary bed-and-breakfast accommodation. We have responded positively by allocating £300 million in additional resources to increase the supply of permanent housing and thus reduce authorities' need to use unsatisfactory temporary accommodation.

In addition, we have recognised the importance of helping those at risk before they actually become homeless by funding the national homelessness advice service, and we have assisted young and single homeless people to find temporary and permanent accommodation through increased funding of practical voluntary sector projects.

In total, those initiatives add up to a significant package of both housing and human resources that should have a positive impact in assisting those in greatest housing need.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 18 January 1991

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Orders of the Day

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, have you had any intimation that a statement may be made today at 11 o'clock on developments in the Gulf? Is that information available at the moment?

Mr. Speaker: I think that I can help. I understand that a statement is likely to be made at 11 o'clock by the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. An eminently sensible suggestion was made yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon)—that the House should sit for two hours on Saturday and two hours on Sunday because of the crisis. Given recent developments, it is obvious that that would be of benefit. I hope that that will be taken account of in the statement at 11 o'clock, so that the House may continue to monitor the position.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me, but I notice that the deputy Chief Whip is on the Front Bench. I am sure that he will have heard what has been said.

Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Bill

9.35 am

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a second time.

As we all know—those of us who have followed these matters—the 1933 Act, usefully amended by the 1986 Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act introduced by my admirable hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), has failed in its attempt to restrain sales of tobacco to children. The reason is very simple—the legislation has not been enforced. The most crucial feature of my Bill is that it confronts and seeks to deal with the problem of inadequate enforcement of the law.

Let me begin with the background to this measure. There can be no doubt that tobacco represents a major threat to the health and well-being of our nation. In his latest report on the state of the nation's health, the chief medical officer said that cigarette smoking continued to be

"by far the most significant single cause of ill health and premature death, and hence of expenditure on health services."

It follows that any steps that we can take to reduce cigarette smoking will contribute both to better health throughout the nation and—a very important factor—to reduced public expenditure.

The World Health Organisation stated in 1986 that it had recorded

"some 50,000 studies of all kinds carried out throughout the world that have irrefutably established the link between tobacco and disease."

There have been four reports on smoking and health, published by the Royal College of Physicians, since 1962. Taken together, they represent a definitive indictment of smoking as a cause of death and disease. The last of those reports, in 1983, stated

"the Royal College of Physicians would be failing in its duty if it did not urge the government to tackle this hidden holocaust with the urgency once given to cholera, diphtheria, poliomyelitis and tuberculosis."

At least 110,000 people die prematurely each year in the United Kingdom from smoking-related diseases. At the heart of the problem of control has been the issue of personal freedom. It has been said that it is the duty of the state to educate people about the dangers of smoking, rather than strictly to forbid it. Well, whether or not one accepts that emphasis on personal freedom rather than on preventive health care, it surely cannot apply to children. That is why as early as 1933 in England—and a little later, 1937, in Scotland, my country—it was made illegal to sell cigarettes to children under 16.

Children who smoke are adversely affected in three ways. First, their life expectancy is reduced. One in four cigarette users will die prematurely as a result of smoking, and they will do so up to 18 years earlier than non-smokers. Thirdly, they develop an addiction that can afflict them, both in terms of health and, perhaps less important, financially.

Recently, there has been disturbing evidence from the Health Education Authority that there is a powerful interaction between smoking and experimentation with drugs. The study of 10,000 children between nine and 15-years-old showed that 57 per cent. of regular smokers report that they have been offered drugs compared with only 6 per cent. of non-smokers. If we are to stop this lengthy catalogue of statistics of death and disease, we simply have to be more determined to help to prevent children from starting to smoke. Seventy-five per cent. of adult smokers pick up the habit before they are 18 years old. They become addicted at a time when they should have been protected. By the age of 15, 17 per cent. of boys and 23 per cent. of girls are smoking regularly—more than one in five of the nation's 15-year-olds. In England alone, 300,000 children between 11 and 15 are regular smokers, and a further 180,000 are occasional smokers.

The hopes of all concerned with children and health, especially parents, that the 1986 legislation would protect children have been proved sadly mistaken. Why is this? Well, I have to be utterly blunt about this. It is because a cynical and ruthless industry—the manufacturers of this product, the people who continue to make and market it, despite the overwhelming evidence of the death and disease that it causes—continue to promote it in such a way that it attracts children and younger people. They do this in defiance of agreements and despite claims to the contrary. Of course, they would be the first to say that they wish that retailers did not sell cigarettes to children. Then they claim to spend £1 million a year to publicise the law. This is, of course, utter nonsense. Children spend £90 million a year on smoking. The £1 million that the industry spends on its so-called campaign to promote the law forbidding the sale of cigarettes to children under 16 is only 1 per cent. of the £100 million a year that it spends on the promotion of tobacco products, and most of this is seen by children. The industry happily pockets the

[Mr. Andrew Faulds]

£90 million a year that it achieves from these illegal sales. There is no evidence of it offering to return the profits on those sales, perhaps as a contribution to the Health Education Authority. The poster that it distributes to retail outlets is pathetically small compared with the point-of-sales promotion of tobacco products. To walk into a corner shop these days is often the equivalent of walking into a packet of cigarettes. Such is the advertising all around and over the shop. The minority of retailers who display the warning sign show a tiny poster that simply is ineffective in comparison with competing promotional material. This poster and this expenditure by the industry are gestures to public concern. They are not intended to be effective.

Let us get the point clear. This industry has a vested interest in children and smoking, a vested interest in encouraging a new generation of smokers. Sadly, it is aided by the retailers. As hon. Members, I think, will be aware, my Bill was initially drafted and has been promoted by the widely praised Parents Against Tobacco compaign —an admirable campaign. Parents Against Tobacco, supported by a wide range of highly respected organisations and whose funding in the first year came, in addition to parents themselves—a very important component—from the Health Education Authority, the EEC's Europe Against Cancer fund and also the Healthcare Foundation, undertook extensive research and co-ordinated research undertaken by local authorities and others into retailers' behaviour.

Now what did it establish? First, surveys of 418 shops showed that more than one in two—224 in all—sold to children under 16. Subsequent surveys by local authorities all over the country reinforce these findings. Some tests showed a very high level of law breaking. Last week, for instance, a headmaster in Camberley, Surrey, found that 11 out of 14 shops sold to pupils aged 14. Approximately half the shops that sell cigarettes in Britian will sell to children under 16 in defiance of the law.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): Has the hon. Gentleman any comparative figures that show whether the position is getting worse among children over the years? It is probably within the knowledge of most of us that adults are less inclined to smoke these days than hitherto. Perhaps this is something that the hon. Gentleman will address.

Mr. Faulds: Yes. I cannot at the moment give the figures. Undoubtedly it is a fact that adults, sensibly, are smoking less. But the evidence would appear to be that children are smoking more, and that implies appalling damage to an increasing number of our population.

The answer, partly, why this has happened—the retailers' position—is the cynicism of those who sell to children and whose behaviour really must be condemned. But if the law falls into disrepute, it is just as likely to be because of the way it is enforced, and that is the case in this respect. A unique survey by Parents Against Tobacco of local authorities all over the country showed that virtually none was surveying the behaviour of retailers or undertaking prosecutions. Of the 110 local authorities which responded to the survey, 104 had prosecuted no one in the three years since the 1986 Act was passed. Many claimed that it was not their responsibility and that the police should enforce the law, but a separate survey of chief constables revealed that some of them believed that it was the local authorities that should act, and none of them felt that they could undertake enforcement of this law given their other responsibilities. Very simply, the law is not being enforced.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I agree that the current law is not being enforced. Does the hon. Gentleman imagine that his modifications will lead to a satisfactory implementation of the law? Proposed section (1G) provides that the local authority that is satisfied "that any person has failed to comply with . . . provisions" shall "bring proceedings", but goes on to state that it may recommend the taking of other steps. Therefore, we may have a containment of the abuse even if the Bill is enacted.

Mr. Faulds: I think that these are fine points that we shall get around to discussing in Committee. I take the point that the hon. Gentleman is making. As the House knows, I am the most accommodating and reasonable man. In Committee, I am sure that we shall come to a happy resolution of most of these points and queries.

Parents Against Tobacco launched the campaign to persuade councils to act voluntarily. To their credit, more than 320 passed resolutions supporting the campaign of Parents Against Tobacco, and indeed some instructed their officials to act. As a result of that we should find that the number of prosecutions taken in 1990 increases slightly, as it should. That is because in 1988 there were only 29 prosecutions and 26 convictions, despite evidence that many thousands of shops were breaking the law on a daily basis.

I have to really be blunt about this. In our discussions prior to today's debate, the Minister has not been able to commit himself to support laying a duty on local authorities to undertake surveys of retailer practice and to enforce the law.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Shame.

Mr. Faulds: Shame indeed.

Unless we take such action to achieve enforcement of the law, no other step that we take to protect children from smoking can possibly be effective. If children find, as they have done, that they can walk into their local shop, garage or supermarket and just simply buy cigarettes, why should they believe that the authorities, the industry supposedly, the public or even their own parents really want to protect them from smoking?

If the Minister specifically opposes that aspect of my Bill, he will effectively be telling local authorities that it is his view that enforcement of this law is not a high priority. How can he do that when the chief medical officer of health says that smoking is by far the most important single cause of ill health and premature death?

I have made it clear in discussions with the Minister's colleagues that I do not seek to impose onerous burdens on local authorities. It is not my intention to require every authority to survey every tobacco-retailing premises every year, nor that they should respond to every complaint in such a way that a prosecution would always result. But the public have made clear their support for firm action. A MORI opinion poll posed the question:

"It is now against the law for shops to sell cigarettes to children under 16. Do you believe this law should or should not be strictly enforced?"

No less than 95 per cent.—an overwhelming figure—replied that it should be strictly enforced. The Retail Consortium representing more than 90 per cent. of the United Kingdom's total retail trade, including supermarkets, off-licences, and the Multiple Newsagents Association, have welcomed my proposals to tighten statutory controls.

All the evidence shows that while there are, of course, some variations, the law is being broken across the country as a whole. Despite the positive action taken by some local authorities far too many others have failed to respond. This is a national problem requiring a firm national lead. While the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) was Prime Minister—she usually gave a pretty firm lead, but not always the right lead of course—she wrote to Parents Against Tobacco to say:

"I welcome this campaign and I fully support its fundamental aims"

Perhaps the Minister should have those words up on his office wall.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): He does not need to any longer.

Mr. Faulds: I still think there is some residual fear of the iron lady about the place.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): The hon. Gentleman will have noted from the words that he read out that my right hon. Friend, the former Prime Minister, supported the "fundamental aims"; she did not commit herself to every clause of the Bill as it presently stands.

Mr. Faulds: I did emphasise the word fundamental in my skilled way because I thought that the Minister should take that point. It is fundamental that we should save the lives of children by preventing them from getting cigarettes before the age of 16.

The Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor)—he is not here now—added his voice in support, as did other Cabinet Ministers. In February the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who will today speak for the Government, stated—perhaps he should hang this on his wall as well—

"Selling cigarettes to those who are under age shows a deeply irresponsible disregard for the law, for the best interests of the retail trade and for the health of young people."

That was a very good quote and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take some notice of his own past words. He also stated that although it was the Government's intention at some future date to introduce further legislation, if, in the meantime, a private Member came up with a Bill, the Government

"would not be a dog in the manger and give it other than their support"—[*Official Report*, 14 February 1990, Vol. 167, c. 371-74.]

The repeated assurances that the Government care deeply about the number of children who smoke will be without meaning if they do not wholeheartedly support a measure intended to ensure that the law is enforced. Equally, claims to be committed to the rule of law will sound hollow if the Government are ready to stand by and see the law flouted to the extent that it has been on this issue.

Enforcement is the most critical step, but once prosecutions are undertaken it is of equal importance that those who cynically sell to children are properly punished. My Bill would increase the penalties for the sale of tobacco to persons under the age of 16 so that the maximum fine for an offence would become £2,000. That is in line with the maximum for other trading offences.

Of course a problem does arise. If we are effective in reducing the illegal sale of cigarettes to children in shops, children will instead go and purchase them from vending machines. Although I accept that the problems of sales from vending machines is not a major problem today, I believe that it would become a loophole and thus a more serious problem later. To leave it untackled at this stage would be a serious irresponsibility. For this reason my Bill would also restrict such vending machines to those places where under-16s are not allowed to enter.

Eighty-nine per cent. of people told the MORI poll that they wanted a ban on vending machine sales to children, yet at present those machines can be found in amusement arcades, cinema foyers and other places of entertainment where children often go unaccompanied by adults. As the Bill is framed, vending machines could still be kept in licensed premises, offices and factories.

I come next to a problem that fills me with particular revulsion—it is those utterly unscrupulous shopkeepers, and there are far too many of them, whose cynicism is such that they will seek to make an even higher profit from children by breaking open packs of cigarettes and selling them singly to children who cannot afford the price of a whole packet. How cynical can retailers become?

It is argued that, because the law already forbids the sale of cigarettes to children under 16, it already forbids the sale of single cigarettes to children under 16 and that, therefore, there is no need for an additional clause in the Bill. But we must force retailers to stop and think before they break open packs of cigarettes. The most effective and simple way to do that is to make it a double offence—not only should it be illegal to sell cigarettes, but illegal to sell cigarettes individually.

The above measures will not stop children trying to buy cigarettes. They will not stop the most lawless, irresponsible and ruthless of retailers from breaking the law. But the proposed measures together would make a huge difference. Widespread publicity of prosecutions and the imposition of heavy fines will have a salutary effect. There is evidence that when local authorities have prosecuted and newspapers have reported their action, the sale of cigarettes to children under 16 has fallen in that area.

Let me deal briefly with the other features of my Bill. First, it is difficult to persuade children that they should not be allowed to buy cigarettes when they enter local shops that so flagrantly and prominently advertise them. Thus, my Bill will prohibit the advertising of tobacco or tobacco-sponsored events from retail premises. That will thus end in-store and shop window promotions of brand tobacco products. For the first time there will be a requirement for a warning to be published on packets of cigarettes stating:

"It is illegal to sell tobacco to anyone under the age of 16."

The Bill would make it a legal requirement for retailers to display prominently details of the law restricting the sales to under-16s. Those last two points are of some importance because the many retailers who do wish to make a stand and reject the sale of cigarettes to children will be strengthened by being able to point out both the official notice and the reference on the packet itself.

[Mr. Faulds]

Parents and children alike need to be reminded that the sale of cigarettes to children under 16 is illegal. Far too many retailers blithely disregard that. I have outlined the terms of the Bill and perhaps it is worth looking at the list of supporters of this measure. It is supported not only by a considerable number of Back Benchers from all parties, but by a lengthy list of well-known personalities from the arts, literature, sport, politics and the media. The list of supporting organisations includes the Royal Colleges of Physicians, General Practitioners, Psychiatrists and of Nursing, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the British Medical Association, the British Heart Foundation, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and Cancer Research Campaign, sports organisations, the Mothers Union, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Townswomen's Guild and so on. What an enormously impressive array of organisations that is. Everyone concerned with the well-being of children wishes the measures to be enacted and they will bitterly resent any attempt to obstruct them.

I must, before I finish, express my gratitude to the Minister and to his colleagues for the opportunity to discuss the Bill in advance of today's debate, which they willingly obliged me with. But the great problem for both the Government and the Opposition over the years has been fundamental hypocrisy about smoking. On the one hand, economic policy is partly based on the income that the state counts on from the sale of cigarettes. On the other hand, the state is so convinced that smoking is a menace to health, that it actually insists that a warning notice appears on the packet saying:

"Smoking can cause fatal diseases."

Controls, as we all know, are imposed in other areas where people's well-being is in danger—for instance, heavy fines and enforcement of the law on the wearing of seat belts. But, despite all the right noises made about smoking, and in particular children smoking, we fall far short of the real action that is necessary.

The Minister has a choice. He can acknowledge that, and give this Bill wholehearted backing and, in particular, support proper enforcement of this law. This would incidentally restore people's faith in the genuineness of the Government's commitment on this issue. Or he can seek to do just enough not to appear to be completely demolishing the Bill, whilst at the same time ensuring that after it becomes the law of the land it is still not properly enforced and thus only minimally more effective than it was before.

Any hon. Member who wins first place in the ballot is extraordinarily lucky, although this particular Member has had to wait 25 years for that break. When I got that break and examined some of the possibilities of potential legislation that I could take up, this, I must say, was the one that most appealed to me. My wife has disagreed. She cares very much more about animals than she appears to do about cigarettes. But on this occasion, as very rarely happens, I overruled her and I adopted this Bill. I can think of no better thing that we could do for our children than to pass this law. I believe that this Bill deals very effectively with the existing problems in illegal sales to children. I know—we all know—it has wide public support, and I trust that the House will prove beyond doubt that it has the strongest parliamentary support as well.

10.1 am

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Simply, but regrettably, this Bill is all about a simple subject—one in every two shopkeepers in this country turning a blind eye to the long-term damage to a child's health in the interests of short-term financial gain, and the potential of a customer for life, or should I say shortened life. However, it is easy to attack shopkeepers and I wonder whether we all play a large part in society's complacency. Have we been aware of the existing law and of the degree to which it has been ignored?

Shopkeepers are victims of their own human weakness, and if no one appears to keep a watchful eye upon them, or to enforce the law—whether the local authority or the police—and they realise that they are likely to be prosecuted or convicted only on the rare occasion, can one blame them? In 1988 only 29 shopkeepers were prosecuted and 26 convicted. Shopkeepers realise that if that unlikely event ever happened to them, they risk a measly fine of, on average, £100, which they could earn in their shop the following day by selling more cigarettes. Is it any wonder that they totally ignore the law?

I suspect that we all have a large part to play in this matter. Shopkeepers break the law daily. Many years on, our complacency has resulted in a problem on a grand scale, which has to be tackled. Frankly, we have failed our children by not acting to protect their interests at an early age. As a result, 300,000 children are now hooked on nicotine by the age of 15. That is a public disgrace.

How can we justify ignoring those statistics? Half a million children under the age of 16 will try smoking this year. The first cigarette may be a bit of fun or accepted to look grown up. We have all been there. I remember visiting Denmark when I was 18 and thinking that young girls wandering around with little white clay pipes looked very chic. I thought it might be trendy to experiment with that and wondered whether I would look chic.

As a teacher many years ago when I was on playground duty on wet miserable lunch hours I saw the kids hiding behind the bicycle sheds, tempted to have a little drag and to influence their friends. It was all very macho. It also seemed rather harmless. As a secondary school teacher I took the attitude that children are devils and we cannot really turn a blind eye—although God help them if I found them behind the bicycle sheds, because of course we must discipline them. I am not sure whether that degree of responsibility continues to exist in our schools.

The trouble is that that harmless weakness, the desire for a bit of fun, leads to possible addiction. We are told that a child who smokes four cigarettes a day has a 90 per cent. chance of becoming a regular dependent smoker as an adult. Do those young people in their teens, or pre-teens —11 and 12-year-olds—have any real idea of the severity of dependence that will be induced by their actions at such an early age? As responsible adults, are we ensuring that they realise the dilemma in which they are placing themselves? I suspect not. Smoking does not merely cost young people their health, but costs them £90 million a year. What a horrendous figure.

I want to pay especial tribute, as my colleague did, to the Parents Against Tobacco campaign. The campaign is barely a year old but it has been successful in achieving a number one slot for private Members' Bills, thanks to the support of one of my colleagues in the west midlands, the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I

congratulate him on his speech this morning. I am glad to say that his efforts and those of PAT have been backed by about 240 Members of Parliament from both sides of the House. What the PAT campaign has achieved which the country has not, is a far greater awareness of the problem facing us. The campaign has heightened public awareness and made us realise that we need to ensure that local authorities enforce the existing law; that the Government consider carefully how best to police the situation; and that we implement a reasonable fine which would act as a deterrent to shopkeepers breaking the law. By prosecuting more shopkeepers and publicising prosecutions and convictions, I have no doubt that the news would spread, and as a result of the embarrassment to the shopkeeper in the local community the law would begin to police itself. Shopkeepers would see that we mean business and existing offenders—thousands of shopkeepers—would be deterred from taking the risk. That must be our aim. We want them to understand the risk that they take.

At the moment the law is an ass. There is no risk, as the law has no teeth. Why bother having a law at all if we are not going to use it? Hence, the campaign.

Sir Trevor Skeet: We have a good deal of Sunday trading legislation in the form of the Shops Act 1950. Local authorities are notorious for not implementing that legislation. Does my hon. Friend believe that local authorities throughout the United Kingdom will implement this Bill?

Mrs. Hicks: I think that my hon. Friend must be psychic: I was just coming to that point.

When we had those terrible snowstorms before Christmas, traders lost business and, to recoup that business, decided to open on Sundays. My constituents —and, perhaps, those of other hon. Members—became very hot under the collar. Where were the local authority enforcement officers? Why were they not prosecuting these dreadful people? Why were we not taking action?

I do not support Sunday trading; I believe that we should try to keep Sunday special. It is possible that in the future I may have to bow to public pressure, but at present I know where my loyalty lies, and I think that those shops were wrong to open on Sundays. Having said that, however, I find myself wondering about our sense of priorities. When did any of us last see a constituent jumping up and down with anger because shopkeepers were illegally selling cigarettes to children under 16? That is the irony: such shopkeepers are contributing to the likelihood of premature deaths, while those who open on Sundays are doing nothing worse then blatantly ignoring the law.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): I strongly support both the Bill and what my hon. Friend has been saying. She has stressed the importance of deterring shopkeepers from selling cigarettes. Does she agree that one of the most important aspects of the problem mentioned in the Bill is the fact that shopkeepers are selling cigarettes singly? If the Bill is passed, that will become an offence. I feel that the most effective way of implementing the wishes of Parents Against Tobacco is to introduce measures combining deterrence of shopkeepers with the removal of temptation from children, and that the Bill would achieve that.

Mrs. Hicks: I entirely agree. The Bill has brought to our attention the extent to which single cigarettes are still being sold; I do not think that people realise how often it happens, especially in areas where incomes tend to be low. When children cannot obtain the money that they want, of course they are tempted to go into shops and ask for single cigarettes. I think that it is terrible that a shopkeeper who may well be a parent himself should be content to open a packet of cigarettes and sell them individually to children.

Retailers who sell cigarettes illegally are actually responsible for driving the first nail into the coffin of a would-be adult who may become one of the 110,000 unfortunate people who die prematurely each year from smoking-related diseases. That is equivalent to the number of deaths that would result if a jumbo jet crashed every day of the week, killing everyone on board. I am not trying to over-dramatise the consequences of shopkeepers' lack of responsibility; I am merely stating the known fact that most people acquire the smoking habit in childhood. We must make them aware of the dangers.

The problem of adult smokers has already been mentioned. Another irony is the fact that, although adults —many of them parents—are being made increasingly aware of how unsociable smoking is, with the public demanding non-smoking areas in aeroplanes, cinemas and restaurants, children do not seem to recognise that the habit is becoming almost non-U. I am not condemning smokers; I should prefer people not to smoke, but I believe that they should be allowed to exercise the freedom to do so. I also believe, however, that they should try to prevent others from following suit.

When I first came to the House, I took part in a survey, as other hon. Members may also have done. We were asked how lobby groups could influence Members of Parliament and persuade them to adopt causes. I thought about that for a long time: what could such groups do to persuade me? All hon. Members receive huge amounts of bumf in their mailbags from people who are trying to influence them. I decided that I would be influenced most if the issue was relevant to my constituency.

When the PAT campaigners began lobbying Members, over a year ago, I stopped to ask myself why they had inspired my support, and realised that it was because I, as a parent, had a vested interest. Nothing is more likely to concentrate the mind on the dangers facing children than becoming a parent. I am privileged to be both a parent and a politician, with the ability to influence legislation and make it more enforceable. I suspect that we may hear today from one or two hon. Members who are not parents, and who may not share my sentiments. I may sound rather old-fashioned—I was rather a late starter as a parent—but it seems to me that young people today are being subjected to more and more temptations, wherever they turn.

I believe that it is the duty of the House and of all adults, whatever responsibilities they carry—whether they are teachers or shopkeepers, for instance—to do their best to protect children, especially the little kids under 15 who often know no better. People must not be content to turn a blind eye. We hear plenty about neighbourhood watch and business watch schemes to prevent the "nasties"; let us set up a community watch to protect our young people.

There have, of course, been incidents of drug-taking in my constituency—perhaps more than elsewhere, because it is an inner-city area. I am especially disturbed about glue-sniffing: it may sound pretty harmless, but what is the next stage? The Health Education Authority has uncovered alarming evidence of a powerful interaction between smoking and experimentation with drugs.

[Mrs. Hicks]

As a sponsor of the Bill, I sincerely hope that it will go into Committee with the backing of the House. It is important for hon. Members to examine the finer details, many of which have been mentioned by the hon. Member for Warley, East, and decide how best to achieve its objectives. The complacency of local authorities must be recognised and dealt with: it is a disgrace that, of the 110 local authorities that responded to the PAT campaign, 104 had prosecuted no one since the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 was introduced by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

I am pleased to report that as a result of the campaign, 320 councils—including my own, Wolverhampton—have passed resolutions in support of the campaign and the need for action. However, actions speak louder than words. We want action. We have had the words. It is easy to pass resolutions, but now we need a commitment so that we can count on councils to take action. However, Parliament must give them the tools with which to enforce the law.

Great progress has been made. There is widespread support for the campaign among sportsmen, show-biz personalities and ordinary people. A MORI poll shows that 95 per cent. of people want Parliament to do something. The British Medical Association, the Retail Consortium and the Royal College of Psychiatrists want Parliament to do something. Moreover, there is cross-party support for the campaign. We must build on that support and make progress.

To do so, we must study the practical implications of the Bill. Some of its proposals will be difficult to enforce. They will, therefore, have to be considered carefully.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): That is the crux of the matter. Although all of us may accept the aims of the Bill, would my hon. Friend care to speculate on those provisions that will be difficult to enforce and the clauses on which hon. Members should concentrate when the Bill is considered in Committee?

Mrs. Hicks: I recognise that there are many difficulties to be overcome. We have already had many meetings with the Minister and I thank him for the support and the time that he has given to the campaign so far. I believe that the debate will be opened up in Committee. We shall have to consider how enforcement can best be policed and how best to ensure that local authority surveys are fully comprehensive. That will not be easy. If, however, we can demonstrate our will and commitment, we shall be at the beginning of an interesting process. The problem is that so far we have not elucidated who is responsible for enforcement. Responsibility has been passed from one to another. Local authorities say that it is for the police to take action; the police say that it is for the local authorities to take action. In Committee we must provide clear guidelines for the public. I hope that they will wish to help us to enforce them.

It has been suggested that vending machines should not be sited in areas where children can go without supervision —for example, cinema foyers and amusement arcades— but I wonder whether such a provision could be enforced. We shall need to consider in depth local authority enforcement and the level of fines. We must ensure that it will be impossible for shopkeepers to open up packets of cigarettes and sell cigarettes individually to children.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): Is my hon. Friend aware that already it is illegal to open cigarette packets and sell cigarettes to young children?

Mrs. Hicks: My hon. Friend makes the point that I have tried to make throughout my speech. We know that that is illegal. The problem is how to devise ways of drawing to people's attention the fact that they must not break the law.

Mrs. Gorman: They must be made aware that it is illegal.

Mrs. Hicks: Precisely. Illegal acts take place every day of the week but everyone turns a blind eye to them. We have to ensure that the law is enforced.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I agree with my hon. Friend that the law is not being enforced, but does she agree that there are two ways in which to make the law more enforceable? The Bill provides—I believe slightly impracticably, and if I am fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall elaborate upon the point —that the penalty be increased, and that if that does not work the penalty be increased again, and then again. I do not favour such an approach. If the law is not being enforced, the alternative is to consider whether that law is enforceable and whether there should be a law covering the subject in the first place.

Mrs. Hicks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I disagree with him about the effect of increasing the penalty. When the average fine is £100 there is no deterrent. I hope that in Committee the Minister will consider a proposal that the fine should be raised to at least £1,000, if not to £2,000, in line with those related to other trading laws.

We must establish how best to achieve our objective —to make it more difficult for children to obtain cigarettes. We must also consider carefully how to bring home to children the health dangers of smoking. They must be made aware of the fact that it is not a playful thing. We must also consider how best to publicise the fact that it is illegal to sell cigarettes to young children. It would also be worth while if signs were displayed in every shop reminding customers that it is illegal to sell cigarettes to young children. I am not sure how best we can monitor advertising so that the frightening statistics before us today can be reduced.

It would be a national disgrace if we abdicated our responsibilities. At present, 23 per cent. of all girls aged 15 smoke cigarettes and 17 per cent. of all boys aged 15 smoke cigarettes. It would be a national disgrace, as I say, faced with those statistics, if we sat back and did nothing.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I see that a large number of hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. Unless speeches are briefer, some of them will be disappointed.

10.26 am

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I am delighted to support my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I introduced a Bill in the last Session of

Parliament, but it did not receive a Second Reading. I am also pleased that my local council, Bassetlaw, has pledged itself to taking the strongest action by means of its public health inspectors to enforce the Bill, if it becomes law.

I am particularly concerned about smoking because I represent a mining area. Many of the people who work in the pits suffer from lung problems such as pneumoconiosis. I attended a widows' tea at Shireoaks colliery; I found that one pit alone had led to 259 women becoming widows. Working down a pit can have frightening consequences. At one time, miners were very heavy smokers.

The Bill is important. It will help to prevent young people from acquiring the habit at an early age. Given all the information that is published by Parents Against Tobacco, it amazes me that it is not generally known that 110,000 people die every year from the effects of smoking. One in five of all 15-year-olds now smoke.

The tobacco industry is guilty of having set up a conveyor belt. At one end people drop off it; they give up smoking at a comparatively early age due to heart disease, lung cancer or other smoking-related problems. At the other end of the conveyor belt the tobacco companies push hard to make sure that young people get on to it so that their sales are maintained. There is strong evidence that the tobacco companies are expanding their activities in third world countries. They offer free film shows in countries such as India and Pakistan simply to push tobacco advertising and thereby enhance their sales.

When I was a kid my friends and I smoked. I remember coming home from school at the age of nine feeling very ill. My mother wanted to send for the doctor; then it dawned on her that I had been smoking, along with other lads, at the back of the bike shed. That cured me for a few years until boredom set in when I was doing my national service at the age of 18. I started to smoke again then.

It may not be a hard fact, but it is certainly common knowledge that the later in life a person starts to smoke the easier it is for him to quit. I conducted a little survey when I was working on my Bill with the Parents Against Tobacco campaign. I asked every Member of Parliament who, at the age of 50 or 60, is still a heavy smoker when he or she started to smoke cigarettes. They all said that they started when they were about 14 or 15. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes), who, as everybody knows, is a heavy smoker but is alive and looking well on it, told me that he would have loved to have stopped many years ago but could not do so. He started at the age of 14 or 15. I asked the same question of other smokers in the Tea Room. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) told me that he was hooked at an early age.

When we were kids, all the film heroes such as Errol Flynn and, later, Yul Brynner smoked. It was amazing how many of them died from the consequences of heavy smoking and of always having a cigarette in their hands when they made a film.

The conveyor belt is pushed by tobacco companies at sporting events such as the Embassy snooker championship and Benson and Hedges cricket. They get free advertising on the BBC's coverage of racing and other sporting events. They put up cash to hook young people on the conveyor belt at an early stage.

It is amazing to contrast that advertising with the breathalyser campaigns at Christmas. Drunken driving is a serious problem, but it kills less than 1 per cent. of the number of people who die from the effects of smoking. Yet every Christmas there is a massive campaign, with all the chief constables hurling hundreds of policemen on to the streets to stop drunken driving. Two wrongs do not make a right, and I am not criticising that, but 110,000 people are killed every year by smoking. There are few warnings of the dangers of smoking, except on tube posters or the bottom of a cigarette packet.

Mrs. Gorman: Surely the hon. Gentleman admits that there is a difference between people choosing to smoke, which may harm their health, and a drunk driver who kills other people. How does he draw a comparison between that?

Mr. Ashton: Obviously there is a difference. I am saying that 110,000 people are killed by smoking, yet 1 per cent. of that figure are killed as a result of drunken driving. I am comparing the different emphasis in newspapers, on television and in interviews with the police. Something has got out of line somewhere when 110,000 deaths are not publicised as much as drunken driving is.

Mr. Stern: I am worried that the hon. Gentleman might inadvertently be confusing the House with bogus statistics. The 110,000 deaths from smoking include anyone who is known ever to have smoked and is therefore assumed to have died from smoking. Deaths from drunken driving are those that are proved to have related directly to a drunken driver. Is not the likelihood that both figures tend to meet in the middle?

Mr. Ashton: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The statistics on deaths from drunken driving include drink-related accidents. Any drunk who staggers out of a pub and falls under a car that is being driven by a sober driver is a drink-related accident. Statistics can be used in many different ways, but we are talking about the wide disparity between 1,000 and 110,000 deaths.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman get off the hook by reminding him that it is widely accepted that smokers damage other people's health, to the point of causing their deaths as well.

Mr. Ashton: I am delighted that the hon. Lady said that because it takes me on to my next point. I introduced a Bill to provide for no-smoking areas in public houses. At that time, the hon. Lady was a Health Minister. Although it received a majority of 99 to 90, the hon. Lady did nothing to try to enforce it. No doubt she will answer that later.

Everybody accepts that there is a related smoking problem. It is amazing that, although smoking was banned on tube trains following the King's Cross disaster, and is barred on many aeroplanes, in restaurants and in many parts of the House of Commons, pubs do not have no-smoking areas. Pub landlords refuse to have them. I do not know why breweries refuse to have them, because all that happens is that people drink at home. They go to the off-licence, buy a six-pack of lager, sit in front of the television in their smoke-free house and drink it. Pubs are losing cash because of that, but for some stupid reason they refuse to introduce no-smoking areas in pubs.

This is an admirable Bill. As the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said, there will be problems defining its small print. The Minister probably remembers me accompanying the Parents Against Tobacco campaign to see him and our discussions on the problems with the

[Mr. Ashton]

European Community's rules on advertising. How he can be against the European Community introducing a measure that helps to prevent death or illness, or even prevent crimes, I do not know, but we shall have to consider that in Committee.

As many other hon. Members wish to speak, and as there is a statement at 11 o'clock, I shall curtail my remarks. I thank Parents Against Tobacco for its magnificent campaign, which received the support of almost half the Members of the House and of nationally known figures, except the tobacco companies. I welcome the work that it has done and the support that it has given my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East, me and the other sponsors.

10.36 am

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It is surely the duty of this House to seek to protect the health of its people, especially children. I agree that older people must make up their own minds about this issue, but until children come to the year of accountability it is our responsibility, in so far as it lies with us, to protect them.

The appalling figure of 110,000 deaths a year from smoking-related diseases, taken with the fact that, as has been said clearly today, usually people who start smoking young are chained and hooked to that ill, is alarming. The House is therefore wise to hold the debate. I congratulate Parents Against Tobacco and the sponsors of the Bill on their excellent campaign.

I am glad that the sponsors have extended the Bill to Northern Ireland, and I am sure that my colleagues in the House will join me in welcoming that fact. I draw the sponsors' attention to the fact that local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland are defined, but in Northern Ireland are not. Perhaps that could be put right in Committee so that there can be no doubt but that the local authority would be the district council, as that is the only local authority that we have. I trust that the sponsors will consider that, because too many people want to get out of their enforcement responsibility.

The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) put his finger on the heart of the problem—enforcement. We have heard strong condemnation today of the cynical attitude of shopkeepers. Everything that has been said in denunciation of those who would sell cigarettes to children and defy the law is fully justified. Those who have responsibility for these matters in local authorities and the Government should be condemned for not forcing the pace. As the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said, the Government have taken the lead in dealing with drunken driving and have advertised the fact that the police intend to nail people who break the law. It is time that local government and central Government authorities made it clear that they intend to nail these offenders.

Shopkeepers break up packets of cigarettes, encouraging children to buy one or two. In Northern Ireland, shopkeepers cut cigarettes in half to make them cheaper so that children will buy them. We must deal with that. I welcome the fact that the Bill clearly spells out what it will do.

Mrs. Gorman: That sale is illegal.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, it is; but it is better for the provisions to be in the Bill and emphasised so that everyone knows exactly what the law is.

Mr. Cryer: In ensuring enforcement of the law through the Bill, is not it important for the Government to encourage these provisions, not only by supporting the Bill but by ensuring that local authorities have sufficient funds to ensure that environmental health officers, who carry out an important range of tasks, carry out this one, too?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I was coming to that point. It is no use saying to local authorities, "This is your responsibility", but not giving them the cash to meet it. They must have the cash to do the job that the law says they should do. It is ridiculous to ask local authorities to carry out a task but not give them the necessary funding. I could not agree more with the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mrs. Gorman: I listened to the hon. Member's story about evidence that shopkeepers cut cigarettes in half. As it is illegal to sell single cigarettes, why are not those people prosecuted, as the law insists? These are often apocryphal stories, manufactured by people who are trying to make a bad case stand up.

Rev. Ian Paisley: As the hon. Lady knows, I do not believe in apocryphal writings. The local authorities will not take action on this matter, just as they will not in dealing with Sunday opening. It is no use the hon. Lady saying that these are apocryphal tales—they are true. Nothing has been done because the local authorities will not take action. They should be pushed to do so. The Sunday trading laws have been violated in Northern Ireland and little action has been taken. I am sure that the hon. Lady would not be so foolish as to say that there was no violation of those laws over Christmas. That is not an apocryphal story. It is a fact, but nothing has been done.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Bill shows the mind of the nation on this matter and the determination to deter this behaviour through sentences and fines? Local authorities and others have not been prosecuting because they have discovered when they go to court that it is a waste of time.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Member makes a vital point. What is the use of taking action when there is no deterrent? I welcome the fact that fines have been increased in the Bill. They should be substantially increased. I hope that the Minister does not knock that point, because it is a vital part of the deterrent.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Surely if there is an illegality, the hon. Member has the right to enforce the law under the common law. Why does not he bring a prosecution if he knows about a case?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I do not think that I have the right under the law in Northern Ireland to bring a case. If the hon. Member would like to help me to finance cases, I shall enter into a partnership with him. I come from Ballymena, which is the Aberdeen of Northern Ireland. I should appreciate having a financial partner to help me in such cases.

Vending machines put temptation in the way of children, who can get around the law by using them. I welcome the fact that that matter is taken care of in the

Bill. It is right that the House should pay attention to this crying shame in our community and that we should all rally in support of our children and do everything that we can to protect their health, well-being and future.

10.45 am

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I endorse the comments of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and support everything that he said. I should like to pick up two points to introduce my speech. First, as a former solicitor, I know that it is notoriously difficult to get corroboration to prosecute. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) rightly said that if the law is breached, the matter should be pursued in the courts; but the courts can deal with prosecutions only if there is substantial evidence that the law has been broken. The House should bear in mind the fact that it is difficult to establish that evidence.

Secondly, I am sure that the hon. Member for Antrim, North did not mean to suggest that all tobacco retailers are bad people. I support the Bill as strongly as anyone and I should not like us to make this a campaign against tobacco retailers. There are many such retailers in my constituency and they tell me that it is difficult to determine the age of some young people. I hope that we will keep that balance in mind.

Rev. Ian Paisley *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: I hope that the hon. Member will forgive me if I do not give way. I agree with everything that he said. I just wanted to get the tone right.

The Bill is long overdue. Honourable attempts have been made by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and by my constituent, the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson)—who would have liked to be here but had pressing constituency engagements—to tackle this problem. The statistics have persuaded me over several years that the House should do so.

The introduction by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) was exemplary. Everyone knows what a henpecked character he is. I am sure that if he were prepared to expand in Standing Committee on the dispute with his wife, we might be able to sell tickets and have hon. Members and members of the public queuing to get in. I, for one, should like to hear him describe that confrontation in detail, although his introduction did not leave much to be added.

It is difficult to oppose the Bill because no new legislative concepts, themes or principles have been brought before the House. The statistics are frightening —we have heard that one in five children is addicted to tobacco, involving expenditure of £90 million. Those who oppose the Bill should make clear the direction from which the dissent comes. We must be honest. I hope that those who oppose the Bill because of legitimate constituency interests—for example, substantial employment which may be affected by the Bill—will say so honestly. I hope that those who oppose the Bill because they are close to the tobacco industry will be honest about that and say so. There is much at stake in the Bill in terms of money. We must be honest about where the objections are coming from.

Rev. Ian Paisley *rose*——

Mr. Kirkwood: I cannot resist the second attempt.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The largest tobacco company—Gallaher—is in my constituency. I made my attitude clear to that company. I hope that the Government will also take into account the fact that they should now start to encourage diversification and the creation of other jobs for people in the tobacco industry. It is no use for us to say today that we support the Bill and then not to take care of the people employed in the tobacco industry by getting them alternative employment.

Mr. Kirkwood: I appreciate that intervention as the hon. Gentleman has made a very positive point. I hope that the Government will take that point on board. We cannot just abandon employment prospects. No one who supports the Bill would want to do that. We are not in favour of destroying employment prospects, but we believe that steps can and should be taken to address that point.

The Bill is concerned with closing loopholes, with enforcement and with the fact that such tobacco sales are already illegal. The Bill merely seeks to provide strengthened powers for the enforcement authorities so that proper enforcement can be carried out. The Bill is also useful in its clarification of the confusion about who is responsible for enforcement. There are conflicting priorities and genuine confusion. The Bill goes a long way in attempting to clarify those confusions. Costs are, of course, involved and I agree with what the hon. Member for Antrim, North said about that. The Government cannot ignore the point.

If the Bill is enacted, it will send a powerful signal. It will give a signal not only to children that it is a daft idea to get hooked on tobacco and nicotine at an early age, and to local authorities that the House wants them to do something about the problem, but to retailers that this is a serious matter and not a minor issue that they can trim round the edges. The Bill will show that we are clear in our message to retailers that we will not put up with such tobacco sales. It is important to send that signal to the rest of the community.

The Parents Against Tobacco campaign has been rightly congratulated on its approach. It is a very professionally run campaign. The point that has impressed me more than anything is the way in which the campaigners have gone out of their way to go down the voluntary route. They have tried to get the voluntary co-operation of local authorities and they have gone a long way in establishing that voluntary co-operation. However, they can go no further and that is why we now need to consider the additional legislative powers that will be necessary. The voluntary approach has done as much as it can be expected to do.

We must persuade local authorities to tighten controls and procedures. We have established a high level of public support in the campaign and we have established considerable support among hon. Member of all parties. The Bill introduces a sensible list of practical steps which are necessary. The law is at present more observed in the breach than in the enforcement and we must put that right.

The Bill contains a combination of elements, all of which are important in themselves. The Bill is a preventive health measure. It would take pressure off the hard-pressed national health service and off other community services that look after our people's health. It would protect children against an addiction—for it is nothing short of that. I believe that it is a personal disaster

[Mr. Kirkwood]

for some of our young people to become hooked on nicotine. It would also save the taxpayer money in the long term.

I understand that there may be some difficulties about the additional upfront costs which will be necessary immediately to get the enforcement procedures right. However, if the spirit of the Bill prevails, if it reaches the statute book and if it is enforced sensibly and expeditiously, it will save the taxpayer enormous sums in the long run and it will throw a lifeline to youngsters who might otherwise be afflicted by this terrible addiction. For all those reasons, it will be a great disaster if the House objects to the Bill. I hope that we will give it a Second Reading and get it on to the statute book as soon as we can.

10.54 am

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on his opportunity to introduce the Bill. I accept his argument in principle, although I believe that there is such an abundance of legislation at present that the Bill is not really necessary. I do not consider it appropriate that children under 16 should smoke. When I was at college we got six of the best if we were discovered smoking. That does not happen now, so we have to use other methods of persuasion to try to ensure that children do not smoke. That is in their interests.

There is an assumption that the Bill will succeed. I want to refer to clause 1(1G). We know what local authorities do and we have seen how vigilant they have been in enforcing the Shops Acts. That is true in my constituency. I can imagine how diligent local authorities will be in conducting periodic surveys and in investigating every complaint that is made. They would have to have an enormous number of people to do that. To bring a case, they would have to be satisfied that there had been a failure to comply with the law and they would then have to bring proceedings or, as it says in the Bill in a get-out phrase, "to take such other steps as may be necessary to ensure compliance."

I am not certain that the Bill will be any more successful than previous legislation. The House should recognise that legislation is already available—for example, the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 and the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986. I accept that enforceability is the main point, as the hon. Member for Warley, East, said. We are concerned not with penalties, but with whether the law is enforceable. The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that under the common law, if there is an illegality, it is open to anyone in the street to conduct a prosecution. Anyone can bring a prosecution and can prevent people from falling into bad ways, but, as has been said earlier, people do not want to foot the bill.

Have we overlooked the fact that while we are trying to lambast the retailers, the people who should be disclosing information and do not do so, we should be considering the duty of the parents and the education system? Teachers spend considerable time with their students at schools and colleges and they can instil into them the undesirability of smoking. Children spend most of the rest of their time at home. What are the parents doing about this? Are they trying to persuade their own children that they should not smoke? There is a health problem involved, so enforcement is not entirely for the courts; it is also for the others involved.

I emphasise, as other hon. Members have, that simply hitting the retailer hard—and many of them are perfectly reasonable and good—is an unfair way to proceed. It is well known that one can chase human nature out of the back door, but it will come in the front door. Human nature is extraordinary. I dare say that some retailers sell tobacco to children because they think that they can get away with it. If they can get away with it under present legislation, it could reasonably be argued that if the local authorities were in charge of such matters, the retailers could probably get away with it in similar circumstances.

We should not merely make full use of the judicial system and improve the law as it already exists on the statute book, but make full use of the sociological consequences to ensure that parents, religion, schools and all the other agencies for inculcating the right ideas into children, are fully utilised.

While it was indicated today that smoking among youths is going up, figures from the report of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in July 1989 show that the percentage of boys who smoke at least one cigarette a week were, in 1982——

It being Eleven o'clock, Mr. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

Israel (Iraqi Attack)

11 am

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Earlier this morning, seven Scud missiles, fired from mobile launchers in Iraq, struck Israel. They are reported to have landed at or near Tel Aviv, in Haifa and near Nazareth. The missiles carried conventional warheads.

The Israeli Government have shown great restraint over the past five and a half months, restraint which we warmly applaud. Earlier this morning, the Prime Minister issued a statement saying that he was appalled at the Iraqi attack. The House will want to join the Prime Minister and myself in condemning this outrageous attack on Israel's civilian population. It will be seen in all parts of the world as a reckless ploy to widen the conflict. The House will note that the attack was wholly indiscriminate, and it is a miracle that no one was killed.

During the night we were in close touch with the United States Administration and with the Governments of Israel and certain Arab countries. I have spoken this morning to the Israeli Foreign Minister and to the Egyptian Foreign Minister.

We understand fully the anger of the Israeli Government and people and their responsibility for the defence of their own country. We have asked them to understand in turn the need to retain the greatest possible support for the military action being undertaken against Iraq, including among the Arab nations who have joined us in that action or who support it. Israel has the right of self-defence, and no one can take that decision from them; but we believe that restraint by Israel at this time would be interpreted as strength not weakness, given the powerful military operation now under way against Iraq in pursuit of the objectives laid down by the United Nations.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): I am grateful to the Foreign Secretary for his statement. The House would appreciate it if the right hon. Gentleman or a relevant colleague would continue to provide statements to the House whenever appropriate.

The Opposition totally condemn the missile attack on Israel, an attack entirely without provocation on a country which is in no way involved either in the Gulf dispute or the current hostilities. It is a wanton act of aggression, based on vicious prejudice. I share the relief that there were no serious casualties.

While I understand completely the sense of outrage of the Israelis at the deliberate provocation, I trust that they will not be provoked. Their restraint so far has been exemplary. Saddam Hussein has taken this action cynically to set a trap for the Israelis. I hope that the Israelis will not fall into that trap by making a military response. The cause of ending Saddam Hussein's aggression will more likely be damaged than enhanced by an Israeli military response.

This action emphasises the basic evil of the Iraqi regime, from which the Iraqi people, the Kurds and, most recently, the Kuwaitis, have suffered. Now that military action by the coalition, under United Nations authority, is under way, it is more essential than ever that it be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) for what he said, which suggests that there is widespread agreement on the subject in the House.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the statements appearing to emanate from the Israeli Government that they are prepared not to take action in retaliation are one of the most hopeful signs that have emerged from the conflict so far? Does he agree that, if they are seen to follow the precept set out by Shakespeare in Act 4 of "The Merchant of Venice"—that

"The quality of mercy is not strained"—

they will materially contribute to a successful conclusion to many of the problems in the Gulf?

Mr. Hurd: When I spoke to Mr. Levi, this morning, the meeting of the Israeli Cabinet was still proceeding, and he courteously came out to speak to me, so I cannot confirm what my hon. Friend said. I laid before Mr. Levi certain considerations. The Israelis have a difficult decision to make, and we understand fully the difficulty in which they are placed.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that this happening underlines the luck in war, because there could have been hundreds of dead instead of seven slightly injured? We pay tribute to the restraint that the Israelis have shown.

A rumour is circulating: will the Foreign Secretary assure us that despite the fact that to avoid hitting civilian targets, 20 per cent. of our attacks are being aborted, there will be no loosening of the excellent precision bombing that is a yardstick of the battle plan? Does he agree that, while many in the House have not, as we have, accepted the necessity of hostilities, in these circumstances those people should also recognise that, even had there been no hostilities, at some not-too-distant time, those Scud missiles would have landed in Israel in any event? That is a fact.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman makes a shrewd point. As regards his first question, I certainly say—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is sitting beside me—that there is no question of the operation being loosened. It is tightly controlled. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, instructions are given to minimise the civilian causalties wherever possible, and the targets that our forces have been instructed to attack are, without exception, military targets or targets of strategic importance.

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): The attack on Israel is an unwelcome development which the whole country will totally deplore, but is not it clear that, however difficult, restraint from Israel is not only in the international interest but in the national interest of Israel?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I shall add a piece of information that the House may have already had from other sources—it appeared that Israel was not the only country to be attacked by Scud missiles last night. Apparently, there was also an attempted but frustrated missile attack on Dhahran in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Does the Foreign Secretary not accept that, while the Israelis will listen with respect to the views that he and others have expressed

[Mr. Greville Janner]

about restraint, it is for their Government, as the democratically elected Government of the country, to take such steps as they regard as necessary to protect their citizens? In recognising that that is an anguished decision, does he not see that it is far easier to urge restraint from here than to accept it after a citizen, his family and friends —innocent civilians—have been bombed, and when restraint may be taken by Saddam Hussein as an indication of something else?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I think that I recognised that fully in the answer that I gave, as we have in everything that we have said to the Israelis who have a difficult decision. Their pressures and anxieties are immediate and strong. The account that I was given by Mr. Levi of the anxieties and fears of the night, when people felt that they might well be under chemical attack, are perfectly understandable. We must understand that as the background against which the Israelis have to take their decision.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his wise and extremely appropriate statement on this new and dangerous development? Will he confirm that five Arab countries are supporting the coalition with military means, and that the vast majority of the 22 Arab countries support the coalition? Does he agree that the allies have at their disposal all the weapons required to deal with the problem?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right on his first point. In relation to his second point, it will come as a surprise to no one that the allied commanders are well aware of that particular problem and are anxious to deal with it.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I am sure that the Foreign Secretary's well-judged statement has the support of everyone in the House, and I do not wish to add to it. However, will he consider how we counter Saddam Hussein's propaganda, and in particular how we use every possible mechanism to show the world that this is still essentially an inter-Arab conflict?

Mr. Hurd: I quite agree with the right hon. Gentleman, and we have spent a lot of time on that. As he said, it is essentially for Arabs to put their point of view forward, as it comes convincingly from them. That is why the Egyptian Government and all our friends in the coalition have done a great deal—we have done our best to help them do a great deal—to make that point. The idea that Saddam Hussein is accepted as a spokesman or champion for the Arab world does not stand up to examination.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that we are asking the people of Israel to exercise self-restraint on a scale that no other democracy in the world would be willing to exercise? Will my right hon. Friend guarantee that he will show understanding for the people of Israel in whatever decision they take, because they have been attacked for no good reason? The fact that there was no loss of life was due to the intervention of the Almighty and not to the deeds of Saddam Hussein. Those missiles were sent to kill rather than simply to maim and injure.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right on the last point. In what I have said to the House and in what I have said in private, I have tried to show the understanding that he seeks.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the successful prosecution of a just war requires conduct so far as possible that is conducive to obtaining a just peace? Since the preamble to the United Nations charter allows the use of force only when peace and security have been broken, is not it therefore wise to remember that the peace in that whole area was uneasy and that security was tenuous for many? Because of that, will he charge all his colleagues and everyone concerned in this unfortunate affair that the successful prosecution of the war is as important as the successful prosecution by the United Nations in a new era of those underlying causes and incidents of which we are all aware?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly the area has become much more unstable since the aggression on 2 August. Our aim is to reverse that aggression as the United Nations has authorised and required. We must then go on—in that the hon. Gentleman is right—to try to work again for answers to the different problems in the middle east on the basis that the hon. Gentleman describes.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): While I agree with the Foreign Secretary's statement and the opinion expressed in the House calling on Israel to exercise restraint, would not it be well for the Secretary of State to assure the House and to assure Israel publicly that the allied forces will do everything in their power to seek out those missile sites and deal with them, so that such an incident will not recur?

Mr. Hurd: I have already answered that question indirectly. The allied nations engaged in the military action against Iraq are well aware of that particular problem and are anxious to deal with it.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the media and the world at large should contrast the difference between the precision bombing against military targets by the international force and the indiscriminate attack on civilian targets by Saddam Hussein? While I welcome the statement, and as I come from a Province in which we know what it takes to try to exercise restraint in the face of terrorism, we urge Israel to depend on the international forces at this time to defeat Saddam.

Mr. Hurd: If I may say so, the hon. Gentleman has both points exactly right.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital for the prosecution of the war and for the negotiations for peace that Israel shows great restraint in retaliation on this matter? Does he also agree that it is important that, in the face of future provocations that may well occur from the Iraqis, Israel should remember that it is important that any retaliation to which it may resort is in proportion to the attack from Iraq?

Mr. Hurd: Both my hon. Friend's points are well taken.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the unfortunate reports in today's *Daily Mail* and *Sun* of thousands of Muslims praying in mosques

for Saddam Hussein's victory, and about friction on certain factory shop floors yesterday? In view of that, will he ask the Prime Minister to arrange an urgent meeting with the president of the Council of Mosques, and perhaps one or two newspaper editors, before a potentially difficult racial situation arises?

Mr. Hurd: We certainly are anxious to show everyone in this country and Muslims across the world that this is not a question of the west against Muslims or the west against Arabs. I have seen much evidence to make me believe that many Arabs and a great majority of Muslims repudiate the idea that Saddam Hussein is in some way their champion. However, the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) has a good point. We must pay particular attention to making that point effectively to our fellow citizens.

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, several years ago, Israel destroyed Iraq's nuclear-weapon-making potential? That action was condemned at the time by many countries, including this one. In view of what happened last night, would my right hon. Friend care to reflect on what might have happened had Israel not taken that action?

Mr. Hurd: I do not want to go back on that, because the present situation is different. Israel is not alone in facing the present circumstances. A very powerful military action is under way, which has begun favourably, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reported. There can be no doubt in the minds of the Israelis about the determination with which the allies, including the more important Arab states, are conducting that operation.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): In spite of the undoubted outrage that the Israeli Government and the Israeli people feel about that unprovoked aggression, the Government of Israel know that that is part of Saddam Hussein's political strategy to involve them in the war and therefore—as he believes—to strengthen his particular cause and gain support. They know that, but is not the major concern in the minds of the Israeli Government likely to be whether last night's attack is likely to be repeated and whether, next time, it might comprise a chemical weapons attack?

Mr. Hurd: Indeed, they will have that thought in their minds. I sympathise for once with what the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) said about that. It is much easier for us to make such points, and I made the same point as the right hon. Gentleman about the attack being a reckless ploy to widen the conflict. That is what it obviously was. However, it is easier for us to make such points in the Chamber than it is for the Israeli Cabinet to reach a decision.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): My right hon. Friend referred a moment ago to the interception of another missile. Is not that a tribute to the skill and professionalism of the international forces, which were able to intercept that missile and thereby prevent further escalation last night?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. That episode has now been confirmed. A Scud missile was destroyed over Saudi Arabia by a Patriot counter-missile. That was a notable and significant feat.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does not this attack demonstrate more clearly than anything that has happened so far why we could not allow Iraq to continue to develop its nuclear capability? Is not the launching of a missile of known inaccuracy against urban targets a terror attack in the pure tradition of the V1 and V2?

Should not the Israeli Cabinet, which I believe is meeting at the moment, realise that it can do nothing to add to the military impact of a United Nations strike against Iraq, and that nothing it can do will deter Iraq —indeed, that quite the opposite would be the case? A strike by Israel would be the only good news Saddam has had since this tragic disaster unfolded.

Mr. Hurd: I do not want to add to what I have said about the nature of the decision that the Israelis have to take, but I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman's first point. Looking at the television pictures this morning, some of us were reminded of the pictures of London in 1944 and 1945 and a house suddenly being destroyed by a V1 or a V2 rocket.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Is not it clear that the latest act of cynical aggression by the Iraqi leader demonstrates that we are dealing with a man who, as long as he has a capability, whatever that capability may be, is tempted—indeed, likely—to use it? Should not the relevant Governments of the United Nations coalition take that point fully into account in the coming days and weeks?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, I think that we are dealing now with someone whose recklessness has overcome any rational form of calculation. That is particularly dangerous.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Does the Secretary of State agree that the outrageous attack upon Israel, which everyone should condemn, demonstrates that we are engaged in a political struggle with Saddam Hussein as well as a military conflict? Is not it important that, bearing in mind the fact that he has asked the Israelis to impose restraint upon themselves, we are able to use that source of strength to take crucial political initiatives at crucial moments? Would not it undercut Saddam Hussein's present political strategy if the Security Council, in a fresh session, made a fresh, unequivocal commitment to convene an early middle east peace conference?

Mr. Hurd: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's last suggestion. An attempt to call an international conference on the Palestinian question in the context of the aggression against Kuwait would be bound to fail. Israel would not come to such a conference, and at least three of the major Arab countries have made it clear to us that they wholly reject the idea that Saddam Hussein or his aggression against Kuwait should be treated as putting him in a special position as regards the dispute. It would not work.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Does not this evil act of aggression against Israel emphasise even more strongly the need to maintain the intensity, precision and discrimination of the allied aerial bombardment of Iraq? One must remember that our aircrews are seeking not only to destroy military targets but to spare civilian populations and centres of religious and cultural activity. Will my right hon. Friend consult the Secretary of State for

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Defence to ensure that adequate air reserves are available to the Royal Air Force to maintain the momentum and to sustain the intensity of required air operations?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that that second point is already established. My hon. Friend is on to an important point with his first question. Certainly, particular steps are being taken by the allies to avoid damage to places of particular religious or cultural significance.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is not the Secretary of State aware that those who call upon the Israelis to exercise what is in effect almost superhuman self-control also have a duty to make sure that Israel is secure within her proper boundaries and that those who speak for muddled political reasons about what will happen after the war do nothing either to retain the confidence of the Israelis or to encourage the Israeli people to respond in the way that we require?

Mr. Hurd: I hope that we in this House have always made it clear that the safety of Israel behind secure borders, to use the phrase in resolution 242, is an essential part—not the only essential part—of any eventual settlement.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): May I refer again to the Scud missile over Saudi Arabia, which we understand was brought down by counter-missile technology? Although nobody here wants Israel to attack, the British people would like to feel that Israel could defend itself, particularly as the targets appear to have been civilian. We would not wish to see that country leaving its own population completely helpless. If, therefore, the state of Israel would wish to obtain some of the latest counter-missile technology, could we be assured that this country at least would not stand in her way?

Mr. Hurd: That is a different question. Equally, no one who knows the situation believes that Israel is defenceless in these matters.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Although I totally agree with the wise advice that is being given by the allies to the Israeli Government on what happened yesterday, is not it important for the allies and certainly for our Government not to come to the conclusion that military victory will necessarily be decisive and quick? Obviously, we all hope that it will be. Should we prepare our people for the fact that the war may go on longer than we would like, and that we are dealing with a bunch of criminals in Baghdad who are determined, as was shown last night, to do everything that they possibly can to widen the war?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence yesterday repeatedly emphasised the hon. Gentleman's point that we are at the beginning of a difficult operation.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Iraq's inaccurate Scud missiles are weapons not of military precision but of civilian terror and that, for that reason, all over the world there will be enormous sympathy for Israel's terrorised domestic population at this hour? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that the restraint of which he spoke could take two forms—either no retaliation at all, or retaliation of a measured and limited and proportionate nature? Is it my right hon. Friend's view that either form of retaliation would not be likely to break up the Arab coalition?

Mr. Hurd: I have deliberately not been specific about the kind of restraint that the Israeli Government might exercise.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): May I join the Secretary of State in condemning the unprovoked attack on Israel? Is not it absolutely tragic that it has taken deadly Scud missiles to demonstrate the linkage that many blinkered western politicians refused to recognise at an earlier stage when a diplomatic solution was still a possibility? *[Interruption.]* I am looking ahead. Does the Secretary of State agree that, once the hostilities are eventually over, the post-war peace conference will have to tackle all the disputes throughout the middle east, and the sooner that is recognised the better?

Mr. Hurd: Of course, as I have said often, and many others have said, once the aggression is reversed we will have to return to the agenda of problems in the middle east, and I hope with renewed vigour. I have already dealt with linkage. I simply do not believe that that would have helped either the Kuwait crisis or any other problem in the middle east.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the absolute security of Israel is a fundamental requirement of the House for emotional, humanitarian and intellectual and rational reasons and always has been, and that, equally, his call for restraint by them, which has already been remarkable so far, will be echoed around the world—a restraint which will enormously enhance Israel's status for the post-Saddam Hussein stabilisation of the region, which will become more and more essential as the weeks go by? Does he agree that, because Israel precisely possesses among the best armed forces in the middle east and arguably the best air force in the middle east, it is showing commendable restraint at the moment for an act which is evil, and is condemned universally?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend that Israel, however well defended she is, is bound all the time to be anxious about her own security. That is a continuing factor, a continuing part of the middle east situation, which we have to respect. Equally, we believe and hope that, after the crisis is over, Israel herself will make a positive and constructive response, which will go beyond simply an assertion of existing positions.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the Foreign Secretary share my pleasure that apparently no one was killed in the attack, just as I am pleased if western bombs fail to kill Iraqis in this futile war? Will the Foreign Secretary comment on the likelihood that NATO is about to get involved from Turkey—offensive action from Turkey—outside its area and its charter?

Mr. Hurd: Of course that last point is not correct. The first point has already been made from Opposition Benches. There is a visible and complete difference between the kind of precision bombing, which has now been well documented at the receiving end, and the kind of holes in houses and frightened and injured civilians in Israel which we saw on television this morning.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is the third unprovoked attack by Iraq on a fellow middle east country, following the attacks on Iran and Kuwait? Building on the point made by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), does my right hon. Friend accept that what the majority of Arab nations understand and what the minority in this country and the House do not yet understand is that granting a monopoly of violence from Saddam Hussein is a recipe for disaster in the middle east and the rest of the world rather than for justice and peace?

Mr. Hurd: There comes a point when violence, once we have tried to check and reverse it by all possible means, has to be met by force—and we have come to that point this week.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that everybody will hope that Israel accepts the message not to retaliate against such an aggressive act, because it would widen this unnecessary war and engulf the Gulf in an even bloodier conflict? Do not the current developments confirm the view taken by some of us that it would have been preferable to maintain sanctions rather than to embark upon a war that has such potentially perilous consequences?

Mr. Hurd: We have argued that point during the last few days—*[Interruption.]* We have not converted the hon. Gentleman, but the Leader of the Opposition and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) carried with them the great majority of Opposition Members.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): While understanding all the difficulties and provocations with which Israel is now faced, would not it be better for the successful prosecution of the war and the cohesion of the allies, as well as for a successful peace settlement afterwards, if Israel were to stay out of the war?

Mr. Hurd: Our way is the way of restraint. As my hon. Friends have said, the options before the Israelis are not confined to just two; there are different ways in which they can handle the matter. Whatever course they choose, we hope that it will be restrained, in the sense that it does not signal the entry of Israel as a participant in the military action.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Is not it likely that an entirely unintended consequence of that murderous attack upon Israel will be a diminution in the near-euphoria displayed by so many so-called experts and journalists during the early days of the war? Should not such TV journalists be reminded that their enthusiastic use of toy soldiers, toy aircraft and toy tanks may cause considerable distress to the families of men serving in the Gulf? I do not ask for censorship, merely for restraint in the enthusiastic use of such graphics.

Mr. Hurd: Personally, I agree with the hon. Gentleman. I hope that what he has said will be noted.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): As the most dramatic events imaginable could occur in the middle east this weekend, should not the House be in session? We could meet for a short period on Saturday and another short period on Sunday, so that statements such as this, referring to the latest position, could be made. That would help us to fulfil our role as representatives, and it would also help us to monitor the position.

Is not the restraint of the Israelis to be considerably commended? Is not it a pity that such restraint was not shown by the American and British Governments, so that the bombings in Iraq would not have taken place, with the disaster that will be associated with that? We hear nothing about areas such as Basra, where there has been heavy bombing.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that many Israelis would agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point. On his first point, the Government have been forward in coming to the House to make statements, provide information and arrange debates. Indeed, another debate has been arranged for next Monday. The House has had many opportunities, and will have further opportunities, to discuss and pronounce on the matter.

Children and Young Persons (Protection Against Tobacco) Bill

Question again proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

11.34 am

Sir Trevor Skeet: Before the statement, I was about to give some figures in answer to the allegation that smoking among children under the age of 16 was increasing—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not remaining in the Chamber please leave quietly?

Sir Trevor Skeet: The figures that I was about to give are from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys in July 1989. The figures for boys who smoke at least one cigarette per week was 11 per cent. in 1982; 13 per cent. in 1984—after which the figures fall away fast—7 per cent. in 1986; and 7 per cent. in 1988. That analysis shows that in fact fewer young people are smoking. As there are fewer young people in the country, it means that between 1984 and 1988 the reduction in the number of young people smoking was close to 50 per cent.

Mr. Faulds: I did not intend to intervene again, because I had my whack this morning, but I think that the latest figures prove that although smoking has declined among boys under the age of 16, among girls under the age of 16 it has risen remarkably.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman, who was right to intervene. I shall give the figures for girls. In 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1988, they were 11, 13, 12 and then down to 9 per cent. respectively. The trend tends to be downwards.

There are so many disincentives to the selling of tobacco that it is not surprising that the numbers are falling both for adults and for younger people. The Government are funding the anti-smoking campaign; there are social embargoes in many parts of the country —such as on the tubes, where one cannot smoke—there are health warnings on packets; there is a ban on TV advertising and, of course, there is increased taxation on cigarettes. All those, together with the right of parents to try to persuade their children not to smoke, mean that the penny is beginning to drop in the United Kingdom that the abandonment of heavy smoking is a good idea.

I began with the general argument that it would be useful to have good legislation, but not necessarily a Bill as lengthy as this one. Clause 1(1) (a) deals with the straight sale of tobacco to children under 16. That is already covered by section 1 of the 1933 Act. New section 7(1B) to (1D) covers vending machines. That is already covered by section 7(2) of the 1933 Act. Although it is right that penalties should be increased over time, it is enforcement, not penalties, that matters. The Criminal Justice Bill is now before the House, and I understand that if fines are inadequate, they can be increased on appeal. However, I accept that there may be a simple argument about penalties.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I do not wish to comment on what one might call the English element of the Bill. I have been approached by a number of voluntary organisations of one sort or another in Scotland, urging me to support the Bill because of the inadequacies and deficiencies in the 1937 Scottish Act dealing with this sort of offence.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I believe that we need a modification of the 1933 and 1963 Acts, but not an entirely new Bill of nine clauses. We can be as sure as we can when dealing with human nature that, our having put certain safeguards into legislation, outside agencies such as the education system, and also the parents, can be left to do the rest.

Proposed new sections (1G) and (1H) apply to local authorities—the original legislation was set out in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933—and are comparable to previous provisions. The new sections are spelt out at some length in the Bill. One of the difficulties is that I can see enormous departments being created in all local authorities throughout the United Kingdom. This consequence has not been costed. Whether we have a rating system or a community charge, there will be an extremely heavy lift.

Clause 2 deals with the Scottish system. It is largely a repetition of what has gone before and of what I have said.

Clause 4 deals with warning statements. There is a voluntary arrangement involving the industry and the Government, and apparently it is working remarkably well. I understand that the arrangement can be renegotiated from time to time. I should have thought that that was sufficient.

There is a voluntary arrangement with the Government that bears on advertisements. If my hon. Friend the Minister tells us of his thoughts about that, I should like to know whether he is dissatisfied with the arrangements that now exist. Am I not right in assuming that in the EEC the Commission is negotiating for a new approach to the matter? If it comes to a diktat that will have to be complied with in the United Kingdom, we shall have to introduce legislation here, making it unnecessary, apparently, for further things to be done.

When we examine the Bill carefully we find that most of its provisions are to be found elsewhere. As I have emphasised, it is most important that it should be recognised that modifications to the existing law would provide a much better solution.

Surely the tobacco industry is not altogether bad. It collects about £5 billion per annum in taxation for the United Kingdom, and that money is spent on education and the health service, for example. It employs, in areas of high unemployment, about 16,500 workers. I should hate to think that these people are to be dispersed. One has the opportunity to smoke or the opportunity to renounce smoking. I agree with the argument that has been deployed by the hon. Member for Warley, East that children under 16 should not smoke, and there is a law to prevent that. I should have thought that while accepting the principle it is not necessary to accept the Bill. I do not, however, intend to vote against its provisions.

11.43 am

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I understand part of the argument that has been presented by the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that those who have constituency interests should speak honestly about them. Like the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I have part of the tobacco industry in my constituency. There are also many

tobacco retailers, and they are concerned about the Bill. The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North referred to the contribution that is made by the tobacco industry through taxation. It seems a somewhat false approach that we should increase taxes on the British tobacco industry and allow cheap imports to enter the United Kingdom from overseas to destroy jobs here. Perhaps the Government should try to diversify jobs instead of continuing to penalise the home industry by permitting cheap imports from overseas. That, however, does not reflect on the purpose of the Bill.

The aim or purpose of the Bill is to clarify current legislation on under-age smoking. The red herring has been trailed that retailers cannot identify individuals' ages. That reinforces an argument that I have advanced on more than one occasion. The sooner we have an identity system so that publicans and others who presently hide behind their responsibilities will be left with no excuse, the better it will be. With the introduction of an identity system, they would be able to say, "Where is your ID?" I understand that there are so-called libertarians who do not like that idea. The harsh reality is that many of us carry IDs of various descriptions.

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Gentleman has raised a fundamental principle. Do people belong to the state or does the state belong to the people? Why should people be identified by a card? If someone makes a mistake in judging a person's age, why should he be punished? Why should a penalty be imposed upon him for, of all things, wrongly identifying the age of a purchaser of any product?

Rev. Martin Smyth: I understand the hon. Lady's fight for so-called liberties. I believe, however, that the state has certain rights to restrict liberties. The hon. Lady might like to drive on the wrong side of the road because that is more acceptable to her, but we must recognise that the state has a right to legislate for the social well-being of its citizens.

We are dealing with one of the greatest problems that affect our society, which is one of addiction.

Mr. Stern: I wish to pursue the argument which the hon. Gentleman has advanced, which I find horrifying. Even the proponents of identity cards, with whom I do not agree, have not suggested so far the enforced carrying of a pass for adults. The hon. Gentleman appears to be suggesting that children should be the subject of such enforcement. Should we send children of 11 years to correction houses for failing to carry an identity card? The proposal is monstrous.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The opponents of the Bill have a tremendous habit of trailing red herrings. Anyone who heard what the hon. Gentleman claims that I said will have a wonderful job searching the pages of *Hansard* to find such words. There is no point in putting up Aunt Sallies to defend a hopeless case. We do not propose that children of 11 years should be given identity cards. I was talking about adults. If an adult has an identity card, he or she can show it. There is no question of compulsory carrying of such cards. We do not have compulsorily to carry with us our driving licences, but we are required from time to time to produce them to show that we have them.

All of us have probably been tempted to smoke. Some of us, in our youth, discovered that smoking cinnamon sticks was a way of avoiding smoking Wills or other products. The hon. Member for Billericay and others say that the law is there to be enforced and that if it is not, it is possible to bring a civil action. The harsh reality and the tragedy is that authorities throughout the country are trying to place on individuals the responsibility of upholding and maintaining the law. The authorities should be setting standards and upholding and maintaining the law.

I support the principles that lie behind the Bill. I trust that it will receive a Second Reading and will have a fair run in Committee. I hope that it will become law. I ask a question, however, because I know something about the ways of mankind and womankind. There is legislation in Northern Ireland—I am not sure whether there is similar legislation in Great Britain—for the supply of intoxicating liquor to minors. It is not the sale, but the supply, of liquor. Is the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) satisfied that possible loopholes have been covered?

The hon. Gentleman has done a wonderful job presenting the Bill and I accept the underlying principles. I support the provisions that relate to vending machines. It is possible, however, for someone older than 16 years to purchase and supply to a minor. In that way the adult is encouraging the minor to go along the path of smoking. The heart of the Bill is sound, but I wonder whether there are loopholes that many will find their way through.

11.49 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): It might be helpful to the House if I intervened at this stage to explain the Government's view on the Bill.

First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) most warmly on his success in the ballot and on his usual eloquence, but, on this occasion, the controlled passion with which he introduced his Bill. He was right to choose this topic, as I am sure that his wife will soon bite back her own disappointment to acknowledge.

I should also declare a personal interest. By that I simply mean that, in common with most hon. Members on both sides of the House, I am extremely concerned about the grave dangers of children starting to smoke and the apparent ease with which they can buy cigarettes. I join the hon. Member for Warley, East and other hon. Members in condemning unreservedly those irresponsible retailers who sell cigarettes to young children. It is difficult to credit that anyone in their right mind should do so. Besides being a flagrant disregard for the law, it undoubtedly helps to encourage youngsters to take up the smoking habit. Every responsible adult would agree that we need to do all we reasonably can to avoid the creation of new generations of smokers.

The issue is thus rightly of great public interest and importance. I am sure that the overwhelming majority of people, particularly parents, want to see an effective and well-targeted Bill on the statute book and so do the Government. I shall therefore ask the House to give a Second Reading to the Bill, but, I must add, on the understanding that we shall be seeking substantial amendments to it in Committee. I hope that the hon. Member for Warley, East and his sponsors and supporters will take real encouragement from that. When we discuss the changes in Committee, I hope that they will come to accept that they will improve and not undermine the Bill.

Before I say what changes we shall look for, it might be helpful if I described the current law and set out what

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measures the Government are taking to encourage children not to take up smoking. I shall then place on record our reservations about some of the Bill's provisions.

The sale of cigarettes to children under 16 has been illegal since 1904. The current legislation is the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and, in Scotland, the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, both as amended by the Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986. The 1986 Act extended the ban on sales of cigarettes to all products containing tobacco, including those intended for oral or nasal use. That was necessary because of the introduction of new forms of tobacco, particularly sachets containing oral snuff that could be attractive to children.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government were unsuccessful in the High Court before Christmas in a case concerning Skoal Bandits? The sale of that product was banned by the Government under regulation, but their decision was not upheld in the High Court. Can my hon. Friend say whether the Government are to appeal?

Mr. Lloyd: I am not familiar with the details of that judgment, so I shall have to inform my hon. Friend of the Government's detailed intentions in another way.

Research has shown that most smokers take up regular smoking before the age of 18. That point was well made by the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), who I know has always taken an active interest in this problem. In 1988 in England, for example, 17 per cent. of 15-year-old-boys and 22 per cent. of 15-year-old-girls were smoking regularly. However, the same survey showed that regular smoking among boys aged 11 to 15 had dropped from 13 per cent. in 1984 to 7 per cent. in 1988 and, among girls, from 13 per cent. in 1984 to 9 per cent. in 1988. The most recent evidence we have suggests that teenage smoking remains at around the 1988 level. Similar patterns are found in the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Government are anxious to reduce those figures further. In 1989, for example, the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority announced the launch of a campaign to bring down the level of teenage smoking. The campaign's main objective is to cut by one third the number of teenagers who smoke regularly. It is hoped to achieve that target by publicity campaigns to influence children and to gain public support. The active backing of schools, local education authorities, health authorities and other national and local organisations is of course a vital ingredient—a point well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) in his sensible speech.

A considerable health education effort directed towards teenage smoking is also undertaken in Scotland. In Wales, the campaign against smoking is carried out on many fronts, including the Health Promotion Authority for Wales and voluntary organisations such as ASH—Action on Smoking and Health.

The measures in the Bill concentrate on the supply side. They seek to prevent access by children to cigarettes. That is important, but I am sure the hon. Member for Warley, East would agree that that cannot be the whole answer. History suggests that supply side control strategies such as prohibition are never enough in themselves. We must look at the demand side as well, and that is why the Government are supporting health education programmes.

The responsibility for discouraging young people from smoking cannot lie exclusively with the Government. A recent report commissioned by the Department of Health concluded that two of the most important factors in young people starting to smoke were smoking by parents and smoking by older brothers and sisters. As long as adults continue to smoke, some children will want to experiment with the habit.

I am sure that the demand side initiatives will have the full support of everyone in the House and of Parents Against Tobacco, which launched its own programme last year with the backing of many right hon. and hon. Members. I applaud its campaign. I have met representatives of Parents Against Tobacco on two occasions in the past six months and we had useful and wide-ranging discussions on tackling the problem of the sale of cigarettes to young children.

As I said earlier, there have been some encouraging signs in the drop in the number of young children who are regular smokers. However, the illegal sale of tobacco to children under 16 remains a serious problem. Research has shown that most children who smoke obtain their cigarettes from shops and that those who try to obtain their cigarettes in that way are too frequently successful. It is therefore clear that the law is being flouted by a significant number of retailers. The evidence suggests that the problem is more acute in smaller outlets rather than in supermarkets or off-licences.

Last year, I announced that it was the Government's intention to strengthen the law banning the sale of tobacco to children under 16. The change in the law that I have particularly in mind is designed to clarify and strengthen the responsibilities of retailers in complying with the law in this area. I therefore intend to seek in Committee an amendment to section 7 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 by removing the rather imprecise "apparently" and substituting a statutory defence where the defendant retailer can show that he did not know, and had no reasonable cause to believe, that the person in question was under 16.

A change of that kind would clarify and strengthen the enforcement of section 7 by removing from the offence the criterion of whether the customer is apparently under 16, and making it clear that the offence is committed where the person is actually under 16, but allowing a defence where the retailer has acted in genuine good faith. That is far from a modest change; indeed, it is one which I am confident will make this law far more effective in practice. It has an excellent precedent in the reformed liquor licensing legislation, where the numbers of prosecutions of licensees who sold alcohol to people under 18 increased significantly when the law was tightened in a similar way a few years ago. I hope that the hon. Member for Warley, East will be glad to include such a change in his Bill, and I am sure that he will. Clauses 1 and 2 of the Bill contain effectively identical amendments to the existing legislation in England, Wales and Scotland. There are no specifically different Scottish issues here and my comments apply equally to the proposals in both clauses.

Sir Trevor Skeet: When dealing with vending machines, which are included in new section 7(1B) to (1D), could not my hon. Friend amend section 7(2) of the 1933 Act as he has said that he wants to amend section 7(1)?

Mr. Lloyd: I shall come to vending machines later. I understand my hon. Friend's question. Indeed, if he is making the point that I think he is making, it is a very good suggestion.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister confirm the definition in the Bill, on the second line of page 4, that "premises" include, among other things, moveable structures? Would a passenger ferry be included in the definition of a moveable structure?

Mr. Lloyd: Subject to further cogitation, I believe that a ferry would come under the law, assuming that that ferry was in a place to which English or Scottish law extended.

Clause 2 fails to take account of the prosecution system in Scotland, which should be of interest to the hon. Member for Warley, East. Prosecutions there are brought by the procurator fiscal and not by the local authority.

In regard to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), the Bill applies to Northern Ireland, and I am glad that it does. As he suggested, perhaps we should mention local authorities in Northern Ireland as well.

I am afraid that I cannot support the Bill's proposals on penalties as they stand. The Bill proposes to increase the maximum penalty for selling tobacco to children from £400 to £2,000. Level 3 fines have been £400 and I believe that that is the right maximum level of offences such as this, which threaten health and safety but where the threat is not immediately dangerous. The fact that the highest fine imposed in 1989 was £250 tends to show that the courts find the current maximum more than sufficient. However, as a result of the general uprating in the standard scale of fines in the Criminal Justice Bill, the maximum fine for a level 3 offence will increase to £1,000. That Bill is before the House at the moment.

I hope that the Bill's sponsors will not be disappointed by that. When I met Parents Against Tobacco we spoke about the maximum penalty for selling tobacco to the under-aged and we were at one that it should increase. A figure of £2,000 was discussed, but, in my recollection, it was not agreed. I wrote to PAT last November and explained that it was difficult to justify increasing the maximum level of fine when the present maximum was so rarely used. More particularly, we needed to ensure, wherever possible, that new or amended penalties are not incompatible with existing offences of a similar gravity.

Offences that fall into the same category as selling tobacco to children include supplying an air weapon to a person under 14. Another example is selling alcohol to a person under 18. Those are all broadly similar offences and it would be wrong to single out the illegal sale of tobacco as warranting a higher maximum penalty and to impose a fine equivalent to that of a level 5 offence such as selling a firearm to an under-age child. I hope that we can agree on the uprating to £1,000 which will automatically be achieved under the Criminal Justice Bill.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): While I accept those parallels, is not there a case for possible compromise here? The lower figure that the Minister suggests could be relevant in a first offence and the higher figure suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) could be relevant in repeat offences, so that we get at the retailer who does not take proper care.

Mr. Lloyd: There is a similar difficulty with the level of offence in the proposals for enhanced and daily penalties. Most enhanced penalties for some re-offences have been abolished. Both enhanced and daily penalties place an emphasis on repetition, which tends to be at odds with the approach in the Criminal Justice Bill for the penalty to reflect the gravity of the offence and not the offender's record.

The Bill provides for magistrates or sheriffs to impose fines of up to £20,000. The normal maximum fine usually available to magistrates and sheriffs in summary cases is £2,000. Extensions of these normal sentencing powers are exceptional and I do not think that they are justified for this offence. The penalty of £1,000 is quite sufficient for repetitious offences, too. Judging by the experience of the courts with the present level of penalty, a first offence would not result in the maximum penalty being imposed. However, I have no doubt that the courts would take it into account if the law had been flouted frequently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North mentioned vending machines and I also have some difficulty with the provisions of the Bill affecting sales from such machines. Their effect would be to restrict the availability of legitimate purchases from vending machines for adult smokers and to remove the convenience and security of that means of sale, despite the fact that there is no evidence of widespread purchases from machines by the under-aged.

I know that supporters of the Bill argue—indeed, the hon. Member for Warley, East said this—that if over-the-counter sales were restricted further by the other provisions of the Bill, there would be a danger of vending machines becoming a soft target for the under-16s. That is their reason for including this provision and I have some sympathy for the logic of their arguments. As far as it is possible to ascertain, there have been no court orders under the existing law to remove machines because of under-age use. That is certainly not proof of the ineffectiveness of the present legislation, but it is consistent with its being observed. That also points to the effectiveness of the guidelines adopted by cigarette vending machine operators, which require them to site machines so that they can be monitored by a responsible person.

However, I want to consider further the wording used for the present offence of selling from vending machines to decide whether it needs tightening and I think that that was also the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North.

Mr. Stern: I wish to draw to my hon. Friend's attention the possibility that the offence of a minor purchasing cigarettes from a vending machine could extend to areas where it has not previously applied, which is not in the Bill. For example, given the welcome trend of family rooms on licensed premises and the fact that many vending machines on licensed premises are placed where they cannot be supervised by the barman at all times, is not there a danger that any additional offence introduced will need to be extended further than suggested in the Bill?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is right; the implications of this clause need to be thought through. I hope that the House, and especially the hon. Member for Warley, East,

[Mr. Lloyd]

will understand that I cannot simply ignore the clause's impact upon the industry. The practical effect of new subsections (1B) to (1D) would be that machines sited in unlicensed premises such as cinema foyers, cafes and amusement arcades would have to be removed. According to the vending machine industry, that represents about 20 per cent. of sites—probably about 30,000 machines. That is a much more significant proportion of outlets than the 5 per cent. suggested by the supporters of the Bill.

I do not know which figure is more correct, but I believe that the number is considerably higher than 5 per cent. —whether it is 20 per cent. is a matter we can argue in Committee—and represents a substantial proportion of that section of the vending business. Even with licensed premises, machines would have to be removed from other areas to the bars, placing a considerable burden on the operators and site owners. I feel that we must consider this part of the Bill very carefully so that we know what we are doing.

Let me now look at what I believe—and I think that the hon. Member for Warley, East also believes—is the crux of the Bill: the means whereby it is proposed to endorse these measures. As we have already seen, clause 1 sets out various offences relating to the sale of cigarettes to young persons; it also makes it a duty for every local authority to ensure that those provisions are complied with. The clause sets out a number of actions that a local authority should take for that purpose. It also requires an authority to prosecute, or take other steps, in every case in which it is satisfied that a person has not complied with the law. Moreover, each local authority will be required to produce an annual report of its activities. Clause 6 also requires every local authority to bring proceedings or take steps to deal with the offences set out in clauses 3, 4 and 5, which I shall come to later.

This is just the broad outline of what each local authority will be required to do if the Bill, in its present format, becomes law. Let us look at what that means in a little more detail. First, there is the question of placing a duty on local authorities. Extra duties imply the need for extra resources and I am not convinced that local authorities should lose their discretion to decide their own priorities. They know the local circumstances, and how the situation at grassroots level suggests that their finite resources should best be used; even if they have extra resources, those resources are still finite.

I think that we would all readily admit that local authorities often have to make difficult expenditure choices, and that would not be made any easier by a piece of legislation that dictates to them that they must keep a constant vigil on the activities of tobacconists in their area. That is not to denigrate the importance of preventing children from taking the first steps towards what may become a lifetime's habit—far from it. However, we need to consider the matter rationally in the light of other calls on local authorities' time and money, which are equally important.

Can we, at one remove, say that this duty should have priority over, for example, the new responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 or the overseeing of safety standards in public places? I do not believe that we can, but that is what the Bill would do and for that reason I argue against placing a rigid duty on local authorities. I was encouraged by the assertion by the hon. Member for Warley, East that he did not intend to place onerous burdens on authorities.

The clause allows local authorities little or no discretion on how they approach the problem. They must carry out periodic surveys of the premises in their area where tobacco is sold; they must investigate every complaint made to them about a suspected offence, serious, frivolous or vindictive; and they must prosecute or take other steps if they are satisfied that an offence has taken place. That leaves no room for manoeuvre.

Moreover, the process must be constant. That does not tie up with what I know of how local authorities handle such matters. It is common practice in several areas of what might be called consumer responsibilities—each in its way extremely important to the health and well-being of the public—for a local authority, again bearing in mind its finite resources, to decide to make an onslaught on a particular area of non-compliance.

It may, for example, resolve to impose a blitz on dangerous heavy goods vehicles. To that end, money will be spend on publicity, spot checks and, where necessary, prosecutions. Such a campaign might last three months or so, the follow-up work perhaps even longer. Another campaign may address the problems of the sale of unroadworthy cars or dangerous toys, or a lack of access for the disabled. The way in which the clause is worded would not allow local authorities to adopt such a cycle of enforcement activities, returning to each from time to time.

Mrs. Gorman: Are not there many other activities in which it is illegal for young people to take part—for instance, drinking, driving and even sexual activities? Are we to ask local authorities to bring in massive numbers of extra staff to enforce the law against such activities? Which of their duties are the most important?

Mr. Lloyd: I believe that all those responsibilities are important, but the level of importance will vary from time to time and from place to place. It is up to local authorities to judge. The Bill, however, demands a constant maximum level of activity to deal with this one problem, at the expense of periodic campaigns against others. That strikes the Government as wrong. Smoking is an important problem, but it is unlikely to require unremitting enforcement activity. As with other matters, periodic blitzes would be just as effective and would leave resources free for authorities to deal with other problems—as my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) suggests.

At the same time as attempting to put a straitjacket on local authorities, the clause leaves the precise nature of what they are expected to do surprisingly unclear. New subsection (1G)(a), for instance, requires a local authority "to carry out periodic surveys of the premises in its area at which tobacco is sold".

I had supposed that that meant an inspector visiting each of the premises to see what precautions had been taken to inform the public of the law and to prevent sales to children; I find, however, that what is really intended is for children to be deployed to enter shops asking to buy cigarettes to test shopkeepers' honesty. I am sure that the hon. Member for Warley, East, will correct me if I have been misinformed, but that is not what the Bill says; nor do I believe that local authorities would construe it in that way.

Mr. Faulds: In the preparation of Bills of this kind, we all leave certain lacunae that need examining and correcting. I am sure that this is one of them and that we can come to very happy terms when we discuss it in Committee.

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's constructive intervention. If that is what the clause is designed to cover, I believe that it needs further discussion. We have not debated the point yet, but I do not believe that the majority of hon. Members would want to insist on children being used in that way, however useful it might be in catching lawbreakers.

Mr. Alan Williams: If the clause does not mean what the Minister fears it means, has he any objection to its remaining in the Bill?

Mr. Lloyd: I do not think that it is sensible to incorporate in legislation requirements from which local authorities cannot resile, especially when it is not clear what they are expected to do.

Let me now deal to the requirement in new subsection (1H) for local authorities to produce an annual report of their activities under the previous subsection. I am afraid that my heart sank at the phrase

"It shall be the duty of every local authority to produce an annual report".

Is this to be another unwanted report that is read by only the very few with a special interest in its contents? If it is to be no more than an annual publication held in the local authority's office for those who wish to see it, it will have little impact.

There will, however, be a heavy cost in bureaucracy. That, coupled with the cost of the other requirements, may be disproportionately high in comparison with the number of offenders punished and the number of children deterred from taking up smoking. I cannot accept that the requirement to produce an annual report will spur local authorities into taking action, although I think that we should give some thought to what information on prosecutions and warnings in this regard should be available to councillors and interested local people and parents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) made a convincing point when she said that guilty retailers would take notice of local publicity. I must nevertheless also applaud the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), who pointed out that we should not forget that there are many honest and responsible retailers.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute those who sell tobacco to children, yet some local authorities have expressed their doubts about that. I recognise that that may be a factor in their reluctance to enforce the law. In order to dispel their doubt and to raise the profile of the case for nipping the smoking habit in the bud, the Government ought to remind local authorities of their powers.

There is scope for guidance on best practice in this importance enforcement task. That could be produced, in consultation with all the relevant bodies. Although I may be averse to annual reports, I see the value of making a proper, thorough and independent assessment of how local authorities, both individually and collectively, have acted on the advice.

In this way, I believe that local authorities would be assured of their powers and, if given the necessary help and advice to encourage them, would take steps to stamp out the abuses in the area. That seems to me to be more effective than the rigid, elaborate but, as I said, surprisingly unfocused machinery that the Bill would provide. I am glad that the hon. Member for Warley, East is happy to look again at the matter.

Finally, I must draw the House's attention to a defect in the Bill. It would impose exactly the same duty on both county and district councils, and in Scotland on regional and district councils. If one set of bureacracy is misguided, two superimposed sets of overlapping requirements are more than twice as bad.

The hon. Member for Warley, East rightly mentioned the mean and shabby practice, referred to by several hon. Members, of selling single cigarettes to children. I am more than happy to join him in condemning a practice that is deeply irresponsible and, of course, illegal—as my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay rightly pointed out. Fortunately, the evidence available suggests that the practice is rare, but we need to eliminate it completely. I am not convinced that clause 3 helps.

As the sale of all tobacco products to children is already illegal, the effect of the clause is merely to make it illegal to sell single cigarettes to adults. The sale of single cigarettes to adults must represent a very small proportion of total sales. The practice occurs mainly in hotels, clubs and restaurants, where customers are offered a cigarette at the end of their meal.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's contention that the passage of this part of the Bill would underline the House's repugnance at the sale of single cigarettes to children, but I am not sure that to introduce an unnecessary new legal requirement would be either sensible or effective. If it were worth while to do so, why confine it to retail sales? The practice of older children buying a packet of cigarettes legally and selling the contents singly to their under-age friends is just as reprehensible. It is also just as illegal.

The Government are currently implementing the European Community tobacco products labelling directive, which requires health warnings and other information to appear on cigarette packets. The directive states that the labelling requirement that it sets out cannot be altered by member states. If enacted, therefore, the Bill would be struck down by the European courts. We should be in breach of the directive's requirements by requiring manufacturers in other EC member states to put an additional warning on cigarette packets destined for the United Kingdom market. It would therefore be impossible effectively to enact this part of the Bill.

I have doubts also about the usefulness of the proposed warning. It might detract from the health warnings, which, in the Government's view—certainly in my view—are crucial. I suspect that some young people would be only too glad to show their friends a product that they had acquired which carried a label implying that it had been sold to them illegally.

As part of its campaign to inform retailers about the law, the tobacco industry has provided them with warning notices to display in each tobacco outlet. They are widely displayed. The industry deserves credit for what it has already achieved. However, clause 4(4) (5) and (6) ought to ensure 100 per cent. coverage. With that desirable end in view, the Government are happy to accept the requirement.

[Mr. Lloyd]

Clause 5 represents something of a departure from the rest of the Bill as it is not directly concerned with preventing illegal sales of tobacco to children. I am not convinced that heavy action on tobacco advertising at the point of sale is justified. It may therefore help if I sketch in part of the background.

For many years, successive Governments have controlled tobacco advertising by means of voluntary agreements with the industry. The most recent, signed in 1986, significantly enhanced the previous controls. It introduced new health warnings, a ban on cinema advertising and a range of measures designed to protect young people. The right way forward is to continue with that approach.

Voluntary controls provide flexibility. The current system, for example, includes a range of controls administered by the Advertising Standards Authority on what can and cannot be said in an advertisement. This is a difficult area to regulate by legislation, when even total bans can be evaded, as other European Community member states have found.

To single out shop front advertising for such a total ban would be inconsistent with the controls in other areas. Measures in this area may threaten the voluntary system as a whole. At this stage, therefore, my reaction is that the proposal is unjustified.

Mr. Alan Williams: By the time the Bill is considered in Committee, will the Department try to obtain information about the number of retailers who combine the selling of sweets and chocolates with the sale of tobacco? That information will influence our view on whether the point of sale is highly relevant or marginal.

Mr. Lloyd: I am not sure whether we shall be able to ascertain the precise numbers, but I shall try to do so. The right hon. Gentleman's experience will tell him, as mine tells me, that a large number of outlets sell both tobacco and sweets. It is a point to which I shall return. However, it leads to a different conclusion from that which the right hon. Gentleman implied in his question.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not known that tobacco companies offer to redecorate the front of a newsagent's shop and to put his name above it, and even an awning, provided that, say, the words "Benson and Hedges" also appear by the side of the newsagent's name? By providing a free shop front for the newsagent the tobacco companies are also getting a free advertisement. Ought not the Bill to contain a provision to prevent that happening without contravening Common Market rules?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I shall deal with it later; if I do not do so, perhaps he will remind me.

International evidence suggests that the United Kingdom's approach to tobacco control and health education is proving successful. We have the second best record in the EC on reducing smoking. Only the Netherlands, which has adopted a similar strategy, has done better. Italy and Portugal, the two member states which introduced total bans on tobacco advertising, have not made significant progress in reducing smoking prevalance. It is anomalous to ban shop front advertising while allowing it to continue in newspapers, magazines and posters.

There are further anomalies in the clause. Apart from the fact that, once inside a shop, a child could be exposed to unrestricted advertisements, provided they are not visible from outside, there is another anomaly. A specialist tobacconist would commit a criminal offence if he advertised his wares on the outside of his shop. I wonder whether the definition of "advertisement" in the Bill means that a tobacconist would risk prosecution if he displayed a cigarette packet in his shop window.

A final anomaly—I expect that we shall carefully consider others in Committee—is that the licensee of a public house would be liable to a fine of £2,000 if he displayed an advertisement for tobacco or for a tobacco-sponsored event that could be seen from outside his pub.

We must consider the effect of the clause on shopkeepers. There are many small shopkeepers, notably newsagents—this is the point that the hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made—whose shop fascias incorporate tobacco advertisements. Often, tobacco companies helped to finance the capital cost of their shops. The Bill would make those advertisements illegal and shopkeepers would, at their own expense, have to remove or replace them or to cover them up in some way. I am concerned about the possible implications of that for some small shopkeepers, whose viability is already in balance, especially as I believe that the extra cost is unlikely to help to safeguard children in any real sense.

Many of these shops, whether they be in rural areas or inner cities, are extremely important to the local communities they serve. I do not want to labour the point too much, but I emphasise that, as drafted, the clause would cause considerable dislocation and expense without helping to safeguard children. It would ignore the point-of-sale material in the bulk of shops where children, very properly, buy sweets and magazines. We must carefully consider the clause.

Mrs. Gorman: Is my hon. Friend aware of work that shows that the presence of small shops dotted around a neighbourhood is an extremely important safety factor? It means that there are eyes and ears at street level, particularly where children and old people are moving about, which adds to the safety of the streets. Closing small shops, or making them close, adds to the dangers on our streets.

Mr. Lloyd: I have not seen that formal research, but my hon. Friend makes a sensible point. If the research suggests that, it coincides with common sense.

I have spoken at length because I want to make clear what parts of the Bill I shall concentrate the Committee's attention on if the House decides that the Bill should be given a Second Reading, as I hope it will. I hope that the House will forgive me if that has taken a considerable time, but I thought it only fair to the hon. Member for Warley, East and his friends to give a clear insight into the Government's concerns.

I am well aware of the hon. Gentleman's commitment to the Bill and his determination to get it on to statute book, and he has demonstrated both today. I hope that he will accept that I want the Bill to pass into law, but that I believe that it will better serve the purposes that we want

to see—the protection of children under 16—if it is amended. Amendments will be necessary if the Bill is to avoid unnecessary and unproductive difficulties for local authorities, innocent retailers and others.

I shall be glad to discuss these matters further with the hon. Gentleman before the Committee stage, in the hope that we may understand each other's concerns and find some agreement. Indeed, as he explained to the excellent intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North, he is an accommodating and reasonable man, so I am optimistic.

I must again stress that legislation will never be the complete answer. We also need to raise public awareness and to ensure that retailers have a lively understanding of their responsibilities. I should like the campaign groups such as Parents Against Tobacco to work alongside local authorities, the police, retailers and the tobacco industry, in partnership and as a conscience and a stimulus. That point lay at the kernel of the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North. We must continue our determined efforts to warn young people about the long-term but appallingly real dangers of smoking. That triple track is the best way forward. Indeed, it is the only way to protect young children from the seduction of tobacco.

12.35 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on his Bill. Most of us and many parents outside the House see the importance of the issue. We are aware that present legislation, however well intentioned, is not working. The Bill's purpose is to close the loopholes and make us all more vigilant.

I thank the Minister for his helpful comments. I am a sponsor of the Bill and I believe that his speech revealed his thinking and where some difficulties exist. The Bill has implications for four Departments: the Home Office—I am here as a member of the shadow Home Office team —and the Departments of Trade and Industry, the Environment and Health. I imagine that discussions will have to be held with them as we move into Committee.

I should like to take up one general point which has been made by some people who are sceptical or who have doubts about trying to control the sale of cigarettes and tobacco to young people because of the difficulty of identifying their age. The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) made that point. Of course, it is difficult to tell a person's age. One may approve or disapprove of the way in which some evidence has been collected—using young children or waiting until they come out of a shop and identifying them. Shopkeepers can tell the difference between a girl of seven, eight or nine and one of 15 or 16 and between a boy of 11 and one of 15.

Pubs have always had difficulty in deciding how old girls or boys of 16 or 17 are, but there is no excuse for a shopkeeper selling to a child who is obviously under age. It is no excuse to say, "It is difficult to decide how old a person is. Let everyone carry an identity card." My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East was right when he said that only a minority of shopkeepers deliberately flout the law. Most of them are aware of their responsibilities. When the law is deliberately flouted, we must act.

The hon. Member for Billericay said that children do all sorts of things when they are under age. I think that she said we all did. I was a model child and I did not do anything before I should have. Under-age children drink. People under 16 have sex, but shopkeepers do not sell them sex—that is the difference. In this case, the law is being broken by a shopkeeper who sells the offending material. Whatever one does in other respects, there is never an excuse.

I never understand people who say, "If you do this, that happens, so you cannot catch that person." Let us see what we can do in the interests of children. This is not an anti-smoking Bill; it is an anti-children-smoking Bill to safeguard children and prevent them from becoming addicted to a habit which many parents wish they had not started. The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) asked where the parents and the schools were. Schools can do a great deal, but many parents who smoke recognise that they are bad examples to their children. Because they became addicted, possibly before they were 18, they find it difficult to break the habit. We all have responsibility in this matter and we cannot narrow it down to parents, schools or shopkeepers. The tobacco industry has a responsibility.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: The hon. Lady has opened up an interesting point. I am sure that she is aware of the difficulty of identifying the age of children. That was shown clearly in a recent survey in the west midlands. It was shown that children as young as 11 or 12 were able to obtain videos that were aimed at the over-18s and that it was difficult to identify under-age drinkers. The survey also considered the Portman group's work in introducing identification cards for young people. Does the hon. Lady consider that that reinforces the case that, if we have increasing problems in identifying age, we should examine more closely the introduction of identification cards?

Miss Lestor: I do not want to pursue that point as it is not part of my responsibilities. I do not agree with the hon. Lady. I know that on several occasions in my area, young people have been refused service in public houses unless they can produce evidence of their age. That is not an argument for identity cards, but for saying that shopkeepers and others can protect themselves by saying, "I'm not sure about your age. Go home and produce some evidence of it." I know that some responsible shopkeepers do that.

The essential issue of responsibility lies at the heart of the debate. There is the responsibility of parents to teach children how to avoid harm. There is the responsibility of cigarette and tobacco manufacturers to promote their products in such a way as to avoid the brainwashing of young, vulnerable minds. There is also the responsibility of retailers to obey the law and the responsibility of the Government and of all in the House to ensure that the laws that we pass are effective, that they can be carried out, that they can be backed up and that they are based on sound principles.

It is no good to quote previous legislation that has failed to do what we intended. The Protection of Children (Tobacco) Act 1986 was an example of a reasonable law that was disarmed and sabotaged partly by lack of funding and partly by lack of back-up. We often pass laws—and the Children Act 1989 may be an example—in which we tell local authorities that they have added responsibilities and a greater need to act to protect children, but that we do not have any more money for them to do that. The local

[Miss Lestor]

authorities that want to carry out their responsibilities are in danger of being poll tax-capped. Perhaps the new changes will deal with some of those problems. We do not have the right to pass legislation without backing it up effectively, because it will cost us a great deal of money. Ultimately, children who are addicted to smoking will cost us a great deal more than the money spent now in trying to prevent them smoking—and the addiction will cost those children a great deal more money.

No responsible or caring parent would willingly place a cigarette between the lips of a child. No responsible or caring Government should stand by while someone else does so metaphorically by selling cigarettes to under-age children. To sell cigarettes to such children is to entice them along the path of nicotine addiction.

I find it difficult to believe that shopkeepers do not understand their responsibilities and the legal position. After today, they should be in no doubt and I should have thought that they were well aware of their position after our previous debate. If ignorance has been the shopkeepers' excuse, we can launch a campaign to ensure that they know their legal responsibilities. After the few prosecutions, some shopkeepers have said that they did not know the legal position or that they were not quite sure about it.

We require that notices be displayed and they should be displayed prominently rather than being hidden behind advertisements for cigarettes, as often happens. All of us can do our own survey. Hon. Members will find it far easier to detect an advertisement for cigarettes in shops than to detect the notice that says that it is illegal to sell cigarettes to anyone under 16. That is wrong.

Although I have been discouraged by the small number of prosecutions, I realise that local publicity is bad for the local retailer. Retailers do not want the bad publicity of people knowing that they sold cigarettes to young children. A prosecution was brought in the area of Wandsworth in which I lived. We all walked past the shop that has been identified and I am sure that the shop lost trade as a result. Although such shopkeepers are in a minority, we should not be soft on those whom we identify as having behaved in such a way.

It is an easy way out simply to blame the shopkeeper. If we say in the House, as we have said in previous legislation, that selling cigarettes to young people is wrong, we cannot at the same time wash our hands of any responsibility to implement that legislation. The survey of chief constables carried out by Parents Against Tobacco shows that over the years there has been confusion about whether prosecutions are the responsibility of the police or of local authorities. Some local authorities said that they thought it was the responsibility of the police because the authorities did not have the resources or, as the Minister said, were carrying out a blitz on something else at the time. Other authorities genuinely thought that it was a matter for the police. The Bill makes it clear where responsibility lies and if it is enacted we would expect to see either a cutting down in the sale of cigarettes to young people or more prosecutions by local authorities, which would be clear about what they were doing.

This should not be a matter of local priorities. It is understandable that local authorities say, "This week we shall look at a particular aspect of the law and next week we shall look at something else"—resource and employment implications are involved. But an issue as important as the health and welfare of children cannot simply be left to be decided according to the priorities of a local authority.

Mr. Stern: I am not necessarily disagreeing with the hon. Lady, but could she clarify one point? If the Bill imposes additional duties on local authorities that will cost money, how does she think that they should get round the problems that she has outlined? Is she suggesting that local authorities should be given a specific grant to be spent solely on the measures contained in the Bill? If not, how does she suggest we avoid the problem of priorities?

Miss Lestor: I am too old a hand to start making policy while on my feet at the Dispatch Box. I am not empowered to say what we should or should not do; it is the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East, not mine, but it is important to look at the funding of local authorities. That was the point I was making about the Children Act 1989—if we pass legislation, we should ensure that it is effective. Authorities will put forward the excuse, sometimes genuine, that they do not have the resources to carry out the legislation. The Bill contains resource implications and I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East has ignored that. There are always different priorities, but, in my book, protecting young children from tobacco is a high priority. We cannot allow legislation and the implementation of previous legislation on smoking and young people to hinge on where they happen to live or the priorities of their local authority—the legislation should be applied nationwide so that people know exactly where they are. We need to be steered from central Government to ensure that children are deterred and prevented from smoking under age.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) mentioned the responsibility of schools. He was right; our schools do not do enough about health education. When teachers and others are involved in health education they like to feel that they are backed by the community outside and what is happening where the children live, and that their efforts are not sabotaged. Young people are susceptible and affected by advertisements. It is put forward as glamorous and chic to smoke. If we are to have a programme of health education and smoking—I wish that we did more in our schools—we must ensure that it is not sabotaged when youngsters leave school and go into the wider community, where there is not such a keen desire to prevent them from smoking.

Many people have given figures today. We know that three out of four smokers are addicted before their 18th birthday. Young people spend a tremendous amount of money on smoking and little of that is ploughed back by the industry into health education aimed at children. We need to de-glamorise smoking, particularly among women and young girls. The effects of smoking on young girls who bear children is particularly lethal. It affects the baby's size and health and can have other repercussions. Although the effects of smoking on boys and young men are just as important for other reasons, it is very important that we should consider what is happening to young girls.

Smoking has increased among young girls recently. A new booklet published by Action on Smoking and Health, which will receive more publicity later, examines the way in which women's magazines highlight smoking. Although

we may be talking about women, we must remember that young girls read their mother's magazines. The way in which young women are being targeted for smoking in many ways which I believe flout the law—though that is another matter—is something we must consider. Smoking affects other people as well as the smoker.

Mr. Ashton: Is it not the case that many young girls are frightened of putting on weight if they stop smoking? That idea has become a shibboleth among young women. They believe that they will put on weight if they stop smoking. Many of them would like to stop smoking, but that fear prevents them from doing so. We need to educate those young women.

Miss Lestor: My hon. Friend is right and I know how those young women feel. I understand the over-emphasis on what is glamorous in our society and what is acceptable. That is another link between what young people do and how they want to look.

We cannot present the anti-smoking campaign for children in isolation, because it is always linked to something else. It is linked to being glamorous, smart, a man-about-town or to being slim and so able to wear certain kinds of clothes. People who promote that attitude have a responsibility.

The figures have already been referred to and I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, so I will not quote the figures in great detail. Reference has also been made to easy access to vending machines. The Bill deals with ways in which that access can be restricted. I believe that those machines should be restricted no matter what difficulties that may place on the industry. We always hear a great deal about how the fall in cigarette sales affects the industry. However, the promotion of the sale of cigarettes and of smoking has a profound effect on the resources needed to counter the effects of smoking and to deal with the illnesses, death and waste in our society resulting from smoking.

The Minister referred to work in other countries and we must consider what they are doing in relation to vending machines and advertisements to see how successful they have been. Belgium, Finland, Iceland, Ireland and Spain have been more effective than we have in dealing with advertisements and vending machines. Some American states which have been encouraged by success in other states are increasing and enlarging their activities in that respect. Similar action is being taken in New Zealand and in Canada. We can consider many examples and weigh up the way in which we should proceed in relation to vending machines and the banning of certain kinds of advertisements.

Another point that I am not sure has been made yet is that the Health Education Authority has pointed out that there is a strong interaction between smoking among young people and experimenting with drugs later on. There can be no doubt from the evidence that there is a connection there. Therefore, we have a responsibility to try to curb that before it develops into something that is difficult to control.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) quoted me and it was a good quote so I shall refer to it as well. She said that children who begin smoking have no idea of the degree of addiction that they will face. They take up smoking because they think that it is glamorous and they are encouraged by examples, particularly in sport. That is wrong, because it links smoking to being fit and we all know that the opposite is the case.

Young people have no idea of the degree of addiction to which they will be subjected if they start smoking, perhaps behind the bicycle sheds as my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said he did. Young people believe that they can stop smoking and that they will be different from everyone else.

In 1988 the United States surgeon general stated that children between the ages of 12 and 17 who smoke cigarettes daily are 100 times more likely to use cocaine than children of that age who have not smoked cigarettes. There are enormous health risks and implications if we do not try to grasp the nettle and curb the availability of cigarettes to children and young people. The responsibility is not just to one group in society; it is to all groups. It is wrong that, over the years, we have passed legislation to try to deal with the problem and it has proved to be ineffective, and we have sat back and done very little about it.

Obviously, there are some loopholes in the Bill. Some points will need to be examined. However, in the past there have been so few prosecutions and the fines have been so low that people have been prepared to flout the law and operate a very lethal traffic. It is time the House took the Bill on and tried to close the present loopholes and so safeguard our children from nicotine addiction.

12.55 pm

Mr. Alan Amos (Hexham): I have raised the issue of smoking and the dangers of tobacco for the smoker and the non-smoker three times in the House over the past 12 months. I am therefore delighted to be a sponsor of the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) to provide greater protection for our children. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on coming first in the ballot, taking up the cause and speaking so well. There is no doubt that the overriding benefit of the measure will be the health of future generations.

I am constantly amazed that some members of the public continue to deny and refute the overwhelming force of medical and scientific evidence that smoking damages health. That is even more worrying when we realise that 23 per cent. of girls and 17 per cent. of boys are regular cigarette smokers at the age of 15. We know that children become aware of cigarettes at an early age and that three out of four children are aware of cigarettes before they reach the age of five, whether or not their parents smoke, which is probably something to do with all the tobacco sponsorship that is seen on television.

At 10 years, as many as 40 per cent. of boys and 28 per cent. of girls have tried smoking, and about one third of regular smokers will have started before the age of nine. An Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report in 1986 found that the proportion of regular smokers increases sharply with age, from 2 per cent. of 12-year-olds to 23 per cent. of pupils aged 15 to 16—nearly a quarter of all children at school.

We know only too well about the dangers to health caused by cigarettes and we know that, each year, at least 110,000 people die prematurely and unnecessarily from diseases caused by smoking, either directly or indirectly, including people who do not smoke but are passive

[Mr. Alan Amos]

smokers. That means 300 every day, 12 every hour, and one person every five minutes. That is the tragedy of it. Smoking causes 90 per cent. of the deaths from long cancer, 90 per cent. of the deaths from chronic bronchitis and emphysema, 20 to 25 per cent. of deaths from heart disease, and one third of all cancer deaths. Of 1,000 young smokers who smoke 20 cigarettes or more a day, one will be murdered, and six will die in road accidents, but 250 will die prematurely because of their smoking. For each person who dies from the use of illegal drugs, more than 400 will die from the use of tobacco.

What is more worrying is the opportunity for further addiction and exposure to hard drugs which cigarette smoking provides. A recent survey by the Health Education Authority shows that more than half the children who smoke regularly have been offered drugs and half have tried them. That includes drugs such as cocaine, crack and heroin. By contrast, only 2 per cent. of children who never smoke have tried drugs. The same survey shows that among regular smokers 38 per cent. have tried cannabis, 11 per cent. have tried LSD, 10 per cent. have tried glue sniffing and amphetamines, 6 per cent. have tried ecstasy, 4 per cent. have tried cocaine and crack, 3 per cent. have tried tranquillisers and 2 per cent. have tried heroin. But 19 per cent.—nearly one in five—of children who smoke regularly have been offered LSD and 13 per cent. have been offered amphetamines and heroin.

Incidentally, the survey found that children who smoke not only drink more than children who do not smoke but are more likely to drink excessively and illegally if they themselves buy the alcohol. There is a direct connection. The ramifications of what we are talking about go far beyond just the smoking of a cigarette. That is unacceptable, yet, although many people agree about the dangers of hard drugs, they simply ignore the dangers both of the use of tobacco products and of the opportunities created for exposure to hard drugs. Smoking, by its link with more dangerous drugs, becomes even more unacceptable in our children and it is time to do something about it before more lives are lost.

I strongly support part I of the Bill, which is designed to increase the penalties for the sale of tobacco to persons under the age of 16. I am sure that there will be a lively debate in Committee about what the penalties should be, but I do not doubt that they should be deterrent penalties that people will not want to face. I also strongly support part III, which prohibits the sale of unpackaged cigarettes, about which much has been said this morning.

A survey conducted by the *British Journal of Addiction* shows that, despite the 1986 Act, which made illegal the sale of cigarettes to persons under 16, the law is widely flouted. The survey found that young people have no difficulty buying cigarettes. Indeed, 85 to 95 per cent. of regular smokers under 16 admit that they buy their cigarettes from shops. More than 50 per cent. bought single cigarettes. Even more worrying is the fact that in 1988 only 27 per cent. of children who tried to buy cigarettes during that year said that they had been refused them at least once. The sales of cigarettes to children are estimated to be worth more than £90 million a year—a scandalous fact. The law is not being enforced if such a blatant disregard for children's health is so widespread.

An article in *The Independent* on 18 October 1990, entitled

"Shops 'help children to smoke'"

stated:

"More than half of children who smoke daily are buying single cigarettes from shopkeepers who make huge profits from the illegal trade, a report claims. By splitting packs they can make up to £2·40 on 20 cigarettes priced at £1·50 . . .

In a Bristol school 80 per cent. of the children told researchers they bought single cigarettes. Authors of the survey, among 3,513 children of 14 and 15 in nine Bristol schools, say there is 'cynical flouting of the law by many shopkeepers who are acting straightforwardly as drug pushers'.

Martin Jarvis, of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund Health Behaviour Unit, co-author of the study published in the *British Journal of Addiction*, said yesterday that sales of single cigarettes proved shopkeepers knew they were selling cigarettes illegally.

Dr. Ann McNeill, his co-author and smoking programme officer at the Health Education Council, said: 'The tobacco industry needs to recruit 300 new smokers a day to replace those who die. Children spend £70 million a year on tobacco. They learn to inhale very quickly and experience just the same withdrawal symptoms as adults.'"

Single cigarette sales represent easy sales for many shops and are largely undetectable. We have had a long debate this morning about detectability and about the enforcement of legislation. Many shopkeepers appear to have little or no consideration for the health of the children they serve—children who probably live in their communities. The problem is wider than that. Many local authorities simply do not enforce the 1986 Act and some claim that it is the responsibility of the police. I have raised that issue in my constituency with the police and the local authorities. The assistant chief constable of Northumbria police said in a letter to me:

"I accept that this is an important and emotive subject but in view of the competing demands upon the Police Service at this point in time, I regret that the legislation in question is of necessity given a low priority.

The Service is reactive in relation to this offence in that we would respond to any complaint received, but because of the priorities mentioned above, we do not usually take positive measures to enforce the legislation in other circumstances."

There have been no prosecutions under the Act at the Hexham sub-division. As Superintendent Bowyer told me

"I share your concern about the whole question of youngsters smoking, but operationally it would be very expensive in terms of manpower to divert resources from other serious problems to detect and prosecute tobacco retailers. However, you can rest assured that my officers are aware of the problem and will act accordingly as and when the situation warrants."

The police understandably feel that it would be difficult to endorse the law, so they do not take positive measures or even attempt to do so.

The duty of enforcement should properly lie with local authorities, which have trading standards departments. Northumberland county council wrote to me last year stating:

"Northumbria County Council has not to date pursued a policy of positive enforcement of these Acts. The Committee declined to undertake responsibility for the enforcement of the 1986 Act or to approve a Council policy prosecuting offenders under the Act."

However, the county council stated:

"A very real obstacle perceived by the Committee in enforcing the legislation is the difficulty of gathering evidence and proving the offence(s). The Committee was opposed to the prospect of bringing children before the courts as witnesses."

All that from a county council which, I am pleased to say, supports the aims and objectives of Parents Against Tobacco.

The current law is no good. I believe that the Bill will deal directly and precisely with the problem and go some way to resolving it. I am prepared to admit that it will not lead to a 100 per cent. solution, but the existing legislation is being flouted or ignored. If we have legislation that is only 50 per cent. effective, it will represent tremendous progress. Let us think positive. Let us not emphasise all the problems and disadvantages and decide to do nothing. Let us do something in the hope that we shall achieve at least half of a total solution.

I am sure that you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, by general agreement, my constituency is one of the most beautiful in the country. It is composed of many small rural communities and, therefore, has a higher proportion of village or corner shops than do constituencies in most other areas. That means that the incidence and effect of single cigarette sales, for example, may be disproportionately higher than elsewhere.

Under the terms of the 1986 Act, district councils were excluded as an enforcing authority for the purposes of the Act. I am delighted that part I addresses that problem and includes district councils in the list of enforcing authorities. I hope that the Bill's provisions for enforcement will make it simpler for the police to prosecute lawbreakers.

It is clear that the public overwhelmingly support an increase in prosecutions and vigilance by the police and local councils. In a recent MORI poll, 95 per cent. agreed that the law should be strictly enforced. We talk about priorities and whether we should have high or low penalties for other offences, but the public regard the selling of cigarettes to young people as a serious matter. There should be some exemplary prosecutions and sentences to deter others from committing the offence. If we set the offence and the attendant penalties too low at the outset, there will be no deterrent effect. The more bodies that are responsible for upholding the law, the more chance there is for the law to be upheld.

Part V deals with advertisements. It is designed to restrict the use of external advertisements on the outside of retail premises. Every hon. Member will have seen the advertisements that appear on the outside of almost all shop premises that sell tobacco or tobacco products. The advertisements usually promote an individual brand of cigarette.

Although it is difficult to prove directly and conclusively—very often nothing is conclusive in science—that advertising cigarettes encourages children to start smoking, an article in the *Health Education Journal* in 1985 suggested that children tend to smoke the brands of cigarette that are promoted most heavily and that advertising reinforces the smoking habit. As the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said, advertising also creates the impression that smoking is a socially acceptable norm. Impressionable children are led to a large extent by advertisements. The fact that more girls than boys now smoke is a direct consequence of the pernicious and extremely heavy advertising that is targeted specifically on teenage girls' and women's magazines. It is outrageous. The advertisers know what they are doing and they get away with it. The advertisements are designed especially to attract young smokers.

The shady organisation called Freedom Association for the Right to Enjoy Smoking Tobacco, which was set up by and run as a smokescreen for the tobacco industry, claims that advertising does not entice children to smoke. That is an extraordinary claim for the tobacco industry's front organisation to make when the industry spends over £125 million a year on advertising. It must be as stupid as it is harmful. About £125 million is spent each year to try to persuade people, including young people and the adult population generally to smoke more heavily. There is general advertising and the advertising of specific brands. The industry advertises because it knows that it works. Advertising on the outside of premises is no exception. Cigarette manufacturers would not go to the expense of creating advertising signs and maintaining them if they were ineffective.

I recently received a letter from a consultant physician at a Newcastle general hospital—a man who obviously knows what he is talking about—who sent me a collection of photographs of just such advertising on shop fronts in my constituency. He wrote that the photographs

"show the exteriors of typical village shops in Northumberland—the majority seem to carry cigarette advertising. They were taken on a single car journey from Wylam-Ovingham-Prudhoe. I hope they help your efforts in trying to protect our children from the attempts of cigarette companies to increase their sales at the expense of an enormous amount of subsequent human misery."

The Bill should be supported because it proposes to do something about that. It will enable children to enter shops without being bombarded by cigarette adverts on the outside of them.

The illegal market in cigarette sales has been estimated at £90 million a year. Shopkeepers claim that it is difficult to tell the age of children purchasing cigarettes and that, on other occasions, they believed that they were being purchased for adults. The hon. Member for Eccles was right to suggest, however, that if one had any doubts one should simply ask for identification or ask for a letter from the parents to confirm the age of their child. I recognise that shopkeepers have a difficult problem, but it is not insuperable.

How does that problem justify the sale of single cigarettes from broken packets? Obviously it does not. The advertising used by the tobacco companies is little more than a cynical attempt to ensnare children for life to their product. As *The Independent* said, the provision of single cigarettes reduces shopkeepers to little more than playing the role of drug pushers. Every attempt must be made to ensure that the maximum protection is afforded to our young people.

We must recognise that more than £500 million is spent by the NHS to care for patients suffering from largely self-inflicted illnesses caused by the effects of smoking. From lung cancer and cancers associated with the mouth, throat and larynx to other respiratory diseases, smoking causes untold misery, suffering and worry for thousands of people, who suffer needlessly. Smoking also causes circulation problems that can lead to amputation of limbs, as well as an increased risk of strokes and heart disease—currently the largest killer in the United Kingdom.

I sincerely believe that the Government must do everything they can to prevent such suffering by helping those most at risk—children under 16. The Bill will be an enormous help in the continual battle for the health of future generations. As well as investing large sums to promote good health and preventive practices, the Government must support the Bill as a means of protecting our children.

[Mr. Alan Amos]

I accept that the Bill is not perfect and that it will be flouted. However, let us go as far as we can to catch some of those responsible. We shall never catch all of them, as no law is perfect, but we should not seek to find excuses, problems and other reasons for doing nothing. That is a recipe for disaster and if we did that we should be abdicating our responsibility.

1.12 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I shall be brief, because I know that other hon. Members want to participate, and I do not want the Bill to disappear under a weight of words. I want it to go into Committee, so that any detailed improvements can be made to ensure that it gets on to the statute book.

I am sure that the Minister recognises that the Bill has limited aims. It is a minor, but important, piece of legislation. It does not extend, however, to banning tobacco sponsorship from, for example, sporting occasions. It does not address the cheating way in which the tobacco companies invade television and get round the ban on tobacco advertising by ensuring that sporting events are provided with a plentiful supply of banners advertising tobacco products.

The Bill will, I hope, apply only to a minority of retailers. I hope and believe that the majority of retailers are not so unscrupulous as to break up packets of cigarettes to sell them to young children under the age of 16 who perhaps get a thrill by doing something that they see as slightly illegal. We know that such sales are totally illegal.

Unfortunately, we have to recognise that a number of retailers put profit before the health of the children who come into their shops. That is quite unscrupulous and completely disgraceful. It is not surprising that, as has been described today, there is a link between illegal under-age drinking and illegal use of drugs. Once children become involved in an air of illegality, it follows that further illegality will be that much easier once the first hurdle has been overcome.

New section 7(1G) of the 1933 Act of the Bill has resource implications. Although clause 8 makes provision for increased expenditure arising out of the legislation, it is important that the Government recognise their duty to ensure that local authorities have the means, if necessary, to employ additional environmental health officers—who already visit a number of retail premises, many of which sell cigarettes—and to ensure that they have enough personnel to carry out the provisions of this modest legislation. The money has to be there, because local authorities are short of money at the moment.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for the Environment came to the Dispatch Box to talk about the poll tax support grant orders and he said that there was evidence of profligate spending. I have yet to hear of it. I do not suppose that any hon. Member, from either side of the House, would suggest for a moment that it is profligate to increase expenditure on the work of environmental health officers to ensure that such legislation is applied.

There is another aspect to this issue, which arose because of two tragedies which occurred in the Bradford area, when two teenagers inhaled solvents, and were asphyxiated and killed. As a result, I wrote to my local authority in Bradford and it agreed that the environmental health officers would draw the dangers to the attention of retailers, in case there was any confusion in their minds —I suspect, alas, that there was not—about the sale of solvents to teenagers.

The police have also provided a useful service, as the Bradford South police division has distributed information to retailers. The local authority pointed out that it was willing to try to do this but that resources, in the form of the time of environmental health officers, are limited. That is clearly the case in most local authorities. Therefore, if we pass this legislation and if we wish it to be applied, the resources have to be available so that the environmental health officers—or whomever the local authority chooses —can visit retail premises and ensure that the legislation is carried out.

I see that the Minister is busy in conversation at the moment, but I remind him that the bugbear of much legislation, beginning with the Factories Act 1802, is application. That first piece of factory legislation was applied by magistrates, who did not have the least interest in ensuring factory standards. Since then, sufficient inspectors have had to be employed to ensure that factory legislation is applied. It is no different in this case and we must ensure that the Government provide the resources if they have any intention that such legislation should be applied.

This is a classic private Member's Bill, as was the legislation to prevent the sale of solvents to teenagers which is now an Act—although one could question how it is being applied. Let us not miss out on this useful piece of legislation which will remedy an important area of abuse and degradation for our young children. I will not go into all the ramifications, such as ill-health and even the curtailment of life, because many other hon. Members have already spelt them out. Let me say, however, that I believe that we should give councils—I am especially concerned about the district councils in my area—the powers contained in the Bill. I wish it well and thank the promoters for presenting it so well.

Let me follow the promoter's example: he was succinct and pointed, and, if other hon. Members emulate him, we can ensure that the Bill is passed today.

1.20 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): Like the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) I shall try to be succinct.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on introducing the Bill, to which I give my full support. There is no doubt, given what we have heard from the hon. Gentleman, the Minister and others, that the existing legislation is not being enforced and needs to be bolstered. Sadly, a considerable number of retailers are flouting the law by selling cigarettes to children under the age of 16.

Let me emphasise that, at least in Northern Ireland —and, I am sure, elsewhere in the United Kingdom—there are responsible tobacconists who refuse to sell children cigarettes. When we condemn those who do, we should remember that others uphold the law: we must not smear all retailers because some offend. But unless the offending retailers are made fully aware that enforcement agencies

are monitoring the sale of tobacco and are undertaking prosecutions, some tobacconists will continue to disregard the law.

I pay tribute to Parents Against Tobacco, which organised the campaign that prompted an increase in the number of prosecutions throughout the country under the existing law. Another aim of the campaign was to inform Parliament of the need for the law to be tightened.

During the campaign, a petition was mounted, and—certainly in Northern Ireland—many young people obtained signatures. That petition was addressed to Northern Ireland Members of Parliament, asking them to take part in the ballot for private Members' Bills and to support the proposed legislation. I am happy to say that all those young people and the adults involved in the campaign came from both sides of the political divide and from all religious sectors. There is some hope for the future when we can all work together to improve the life of our community.

I met some of the schoolchildren who collected signatures for the petition and was deeply impressed by their zeal and their awareness of the dangers of tobacco to people of all ages, but especially to their own age group. Children are so easily tempted to smoke cigarettes. A plethora of advertisements entice them to take it up: everywhere they go, they see advertisements that make smoking seem attractive.

As we have heard, it has been estimated that 23 per cent. of girls and 17 per cent. of boys aged 15 are smokers. Some try it for a dare when they are that age or younger; others try it in imitation of their seniors—parents, relatives and teachers. Some children smoke because they see their pop or cinema idols doing so on either stage or screen. They take it as a signal to do the same.

The consequences of smoking regularly are grave. I shall not set them out at length, since the hon. Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) did so. Smoking is addictive and it takes its toll on the health of a young person. There is a suspicion that cigarette manufacturers want young people to become addicted in order to ensure steady tobacco sales. Many hon. Members have referred to the fact that most regular smokers acquire the habit in their teens. One in four cigarette smokers will die prematurely from cancer and other smoking-related diseases. In 1983, the Royal College of Physicians said:

"One of the most effective strategies in reducing the cost of smoking would be to stamp out the epidemic at its source—in children."

We must make it known to others that tobacco is the primary cause of death in the United Kingdom. Cigarette smoking has even wider ramifications. It is a significant cause of ill health in the community and it places an intolerable burden on the national health service. The health warning on cigarette packets is inadequate. The fact that cigarette smoking, is a potential killer should be made absolutely clear on all cigarette packets. It should be impossible in this day and age for people to make a profit out of the misfortune of others.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South referred to the way in which the tobacco industry uses sponsorship of, say, sports events on television to promote cigarette smoking. Cigarette advertisements at sports events encourage young people to take up smoking. There should, therefore, be an absolute prohibition of sponsorship of sports events by cigarette companies.

All people must be warned of the dangers of cigarette smoking, but, above all, we must protect children under the age of 16. Every year, 100,000 people die prematurely from smoking-related diseases. That stark statistic should alarm us all. We must act now. The Bill would help us to protect young people.

The Minister said that legislation is not the complete answer, and I agree. However, if it resulted in the saving of a few lives, we should have done a worthwhile job. I agree with him, too, that greater public awareness of the dangers of tobacco smoking is required. The Government, local authorities, schools, parents—all of us—must fight to protect young people from the ills that flow from smoking tobacco.

1.28 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): As I listened to the sentiments expressed on the subject of tobacco smoking I began to wonder what it would have been like to sit here 100 years ago on a Friday morning. We should probably have been holding a debate about the evils of drink and the activities of the temperance movement. Efforts were being made then to stamp out the wicked propensity of human beings to drink themselves silly. They highlighted the fact that children were able to go into gin palaces and that they went round to the pub with their porter jug to obtain drink for their parents. They said that that had to be stopped. The temperance movement and alcohol was the big, bad wolf at that time. Today, it is tobacco. A well-organised body of pressure groups see their role in life as mending human nature by making us cut out the bad habit of smoking tobacco.

I do not smoke and gave up when I was about 14. I used to buy my three Wills Whiffs at the off-licence in the evening and smoke them in the coal shed, not behind the bicycle shed. I did not like it and gave it up. Human beings are perfectly capable of deciding whether they want to indulge in that vice.

It is not true, as the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) said, that tobacco kills more people than anything else. The biggest killer among adults is heart attacks and stroke, which is due mainly to cholesterol and bad eating habits. Will we start banning cream buns? It is nonsense to suggest that tobacco is the worst habit and that developing it young will cause the nation enormous problems.

Ms. Harman: Does the hon. Lady challenge the medical and scientific evidence on the strong link between smoking and heart disease? Perhaps she will make it clear to the House whether she is the one hon. Member present today who does not accept all the medical and scientific evidence, not only from this country but from abroad? Does she accept that evidence, or does she take a different view?

Mr. Gorman: Does the hon. Lady accept the scientific evidence that butter and dairy products cause most of the problems of heart disease and that other products are responsible for forms of cancer? I am not advocating tobacco. I am saying not that it is good for people but that there is something odd about this place which attracts puritans who are pushovers for pressure lobbies that want to promote their views on how to mend humanity's ways.

We already have legislation making the sale of tobacco to under-16s illegal. The purpose of the Bill is not to prevent sales to under-16s but to push the idea that

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tobacco should be made illegal for adults. We are trying to increase penalties so as to terrify tobacconists into not selling it, because the fewer the outlets, the less chance there will of people, adults as well as children, buying the stuff.

Many other products are bad for us, but it is fashionable to pick on tobacco. I do not smoke and I am not on the payroll of any tobacco company, but it is true that the tobacco companies take their responsibility about illegal sales to under-16s seriously. In the past few years, they have run a campaign costing £3·5 million to inform shopkeepers of their responsibility. Many shops—I quite often go into sweet shops and tobacconists to get my newspaper; they are useful local business men—display a notice saying that it is illegal to sell tobacco products to under-16s. It has been said several times this morning that there is a margin at which a 14 or 15-year-old may look older. Are we really saying that people who make that mistake should be liable to a fine of £2,000 and if they have slipped up once or twice, it increases to £20,000? We do not punish serious criminals as hard as that, but because tobacco is involved we make an example of offenders.

The motives of Parents Against Tobacco should be considered. If they are good parents, presumably they encourage their children to follow sensible habits, but Parents Against Tobacco are parents against those weak or bad parents who do not bring up their children properly. They are puritanical people who want to inflict their view of how to raise children on other people. That is one nasty aspect. They get most of their money from Action on Smoking and Health, another of the Des Wilson category of pressure groups. ASH is given money by the state, as are the Health Education Authority and many other bodies, to put across to the public the idea that smoking is silly because it is bad for people. We have heard about the cynicism of people who sell tobacco, but what about the cynicism of PAT, whose members are using children to get at adult smokers and those who sell tobacco? They are concerned not so much about children as about stopping us doing something of which they disapprove.

The Bill is likely to cause problems for respectable, worthy and useful people in society—the shopkeepers, mini-market proprietors, tobacconists, sweet sellers and newsagents who do a useful job. Selling tobacco is not a crime yet, although PAT and ASH would like to make it one. The temperance people outlawed booze, but people went on drinking it, just as people will go on smoking if they want to do so. The Bill will not stop young people getting cigarettes, because they will get them from their older brothers and sisters, because they will pinch them from their parents' cigarette packets or because they will smoke dog-ends from ashtrays. If people want to be naughty, they will find the necessary means. Legislation does not change human nature. Persuasion may.

Shopkeepers will bear the brunt of the measures. They are not to put up tobacco advertisements inside or outside their shops. Tobacco advertising is allowed elsewhere, so the shopkeepers will be penalised. A shopkeeper who owns a vending machine which a young person uses will be fined. The purpose of a vending machine it to sell something when no proprietor is standing by to make a sale. By definition, the proprietor cannot supervise that machine all the time, yet if a young person buys a packet of cigarettes from one, the proprietor is liable to a fine of from £2,000 to £20,000. The principle is completely wrong.

Even the sale of cigarette papers to people under 16 is to become a crime. We are creating new categories of dangerous products as though they were dangerous goods such as Semtex or poison. The Bill contains much more than is required and is unnecessary because legislation already exists to deal with the problem.

Much has been said about who benefits. The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said in an interesting intervention that more inspectors, enforcement officers, jobs for the local authority boys and much more money to enforce the legislation will be needed. It is already difficult to find money. The community charge for many people is over the top because some local authorities, especially Labour ones, like to have enforcement officers running around managing the nanny state.

The Bill is actually about more enforcement in our society and it is about reducing the rights of individuals to do what they like with their lives. Laws already exist for the protection of children. The important point, which has been raised, is that although there is legislation—and by and large, it is enforced—the fact there are few prosecutions is not because there are no people to catch those who sell tobacco to children, but because most people who sell tobacco obey the law in this respect. We shall not improve that position by adding penalties, which might be incurred through the intervention of agents provocateurs. Parents Against Tobacco sends people into shops to try to catch shopkeepers doing something wrong.

If the law is to be respected, it must be respectable. If we go over the top with legislation, we simply bring our activities into disrepute. The reason why the Bill will probably go into Committee—and so waste more of our time—is that we have to be seen to be on the side of those who want to try to stop us harming ourselves.

It is the job of parents to see that their children know what is right and wrong. It is the job of the law to see that the penalties are applied. We do not need more legislation to try to bring that about. That is not the object of the PAT people. They are trying to make tobacco in general illegal in the long term. Although I hate the stuff myself and I do not like people puffing smoke into my face, I should fight for the rights of individuals to be able to smoke tobacco if they want to.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend. Does not she consider that her appraisal of the good work done so far by PAT is unjust? She spoke about the House going "over the top". Is not she in danger of going over the top?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): That is all she can do.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: My hon. Friend is totally at odds with public opinion. Has she taken the opportunity to speak to members of PAT to assess their reasons for campaigning?

Mrs. Gorman: The PAT people have made their views perfectly clear. PAT stands for Parents Against Tobacco, so I do not need to ask them why they are campaigning. My hon. Friend suggested that public opinion is fully behind them. How do I know that? I know only what people with vested interests tell me. In the same way, the

tobacco industry tells me that it is spending money to ensure that shopkeepers obey the law. I believe that the PAT people can make their own point.

My point is that people have a duty as parents, and parents do not need PAT to prompt them to tell their children what is good and bad for them. We already have legislation against young children being sold tobacco. We should not spend our time increasing penalties for shopkeepers who could sell tobacco innocently to a child who is technically under age. If that happens, reasonable fines are available to punish them. That is enough to stop such shopkeepers breaking the law again. To increase the fines and to introduce the penalties that some people have suggested leads me to question their motivation. The motivation of ASH is ultimately to outlaw tobacco and it is using children to try to advance its case.

1.43 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I have listened to some of the speeches made from both sides of the House today and if the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) had not spoken I do not think that I would have taken part in the debate. There have been some superb speeches and there is obviously general agreement and support for the Bill. I suppose that all hon. Members have a right to express their views—that is what democracy is about. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said while the hon. Member for Billericay was speaking, she only knows how to go over the top. Like any hon. Member talking on any Bill, she has a right to say why she objects, but she dismissed many aspects of the case against smoking that we know to have been proven.

The hon. Member for Billericay said that we should not bother with what those who are against children smoking say about its effect on health. She said that eating cream buns could be far more damaging than smoking 20 cigarettes a day—and I see she is nodding. A major London hospital, St. George's hospital, Tooting is in my constituency. The hon. Lady must have a hospital in the radius of her constituency. From my many visits to St. George's hospital, I have found that senior consultants repeatedly say that one of their great worries based on their wide medical experience, is the danger to health created by smoking. Of course, we agree that if someone eats certain foods it can be damaging, but nothing has been more clearly proved than the dangers of smoking, which is surely part of what the Bill is trying to prevent.

Mrs. Gorman: Alcohol is much, much more dangerous, not only to the individual but through the number of accidents and crimes that are directly related to alcohol abuse. Tobacco simply does not come into that class.

Mr. Cox: That is a matter of opinion. I do not dispute for one minute that, sadly, as we have seen over the Christmas holiday, if people drink to excess, they are a danger not only to themselves, but to many innocent people. I did not attend the statements by transport Ministers announcing the anti-drink campaign for Christmas, but it would have been interesting to see whether the hon. Member for Billericay took the view that if someone wants to drink; why should we stop him or her from doing it, to hell if anyone gets in the way and is knocked down, injured or killed. Would she say that people should not be in the way of motorists exercising their freedom to have a good drink and drive a car? That is the logic of what the hon. Lady is saying.

Some hon. Members have been in the Chamber longer than I today and they have a right to be called. The hon. Lady made comments against Parents Against Tobacco and was challenged by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) about what kind of meetings and involvement she had had with that campaign. I understood the hon. Member for Billericay to ask why she should bother with representatives from that campaign because she knew what they were going to tell her. If that is the hon. Lady's idea of seeking consultation with interested parties, whatever the issue may be, it is not a good recommendation for her as a Member of this place. Surely, the real criterion for being a Member of Parliament, irrespective of what party, is to listen to the people we seek to represent.

We all know that there has been widespread opportunity for hon. Members, either within their own constituencies or through the campaigns by PAT that have taken place in and around Westminster, to meet and listen to what people are seeking to convey. I know, as I am sure the hon. Member for Billericay and every hon. Member knows, that we judge public opinion by the sort of postbags we receive. We always know when we receive a postbag telling us that people are not in favour of something. I have received about 70 letters on the Bill, which is not a bad number of letters for one issue. We receive even more letters on matters such as abortion when the postbag swells because there are two distinct opinions on abortion—in favour or against.

Not one of the letters that I received demanded that I should not support the Bill. All the letters warmly welcomed it. As hon. Members have said today, some issues should be discussed in more detail and those discussions should take place in Standing Committee.

The hon. Member for Billericay referred to the persecution of shopkeepers. As other hon. Members have said, many shopkeepers fully obey the law. However, others sadly do not. There is widespread public support for this Bill and we have a duty to support it. What about drugs? If we know that illegal drugs are being sold, should we ignore that because that is what freedom of choice is all about?

Mrs. Gorman: Drugs are illegal.

Mr. Cox: Yes, we know that. However, whether or not they are illegal, we know that they are still being sold. Is the hon. Lady claiming that we should do nothing about drugs simply because they are illegal and therefore should not be sold or traded?

There is clear evidence of wide support for the Bill. As other hon. Members have said, some aspects of the Bill may require discussion. The Minister made the Government's thinking on the Bill very clear. We should give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading and allow it to enter Standing Committee where it can be discussed in detail. That is how democracy in the country and in this House should be pursued.

I was a Government Whip for five years. At times I had to object to Bills of which I did not approve while at other times I had to object to Bills of which I did approve. However, until we have a system under which Bills like

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this, which have enormous support among the general public, at least enter Committee and receive a fair hearing, we do a grave disservice to the people we try to represent.

I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on presenting the Bill and I welcome the wide support for it. I hope that no attempt will be made to prevent it going where it should go—into Committee for further dicussion.

1.52 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I should declare a personal, but not a financial, interest in this matter. I am pursuing a fellowship with the Industry and Parliament Trust and I am doing that with a tobacco manufacturing company. The object of the IPT is to give hon. Members a greater insight into the problems of an industry. Therefore, I may speak with a little more authority about the industry than I might otherwise have done and that may be a good thing for Parliament generally. I have the advantage of knowing how the industry operates and the constraints that it faces. Most hon. Members have had the benefit of the helpful briefing from the Tobacco Advisory Council in relation to this Bill.

There can be little objection to the Bill. Its express motive is correct. No sensible person can properly object to decent safeguards to protect children from what is basically an adult habit. The Retail Consortium has made it clear that it strongly condemns the minority who break the law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) referred to all the retailers who break the law. We need a sense of proportion here. A small minority of retailers break the law, but we should recognise that the vast majority are conscientious and the last thing they want to do is to sell cigarettes to under 16-year-olds.

My regret is that the Bill has been drafted by people in the anti-smoking movement. It therefore has the hidden agenda of trying to stop smoking altogether, not necessarily to protect children, which I and the tobacco industry accept must be done, but to use children for the main anti-smoking purpose of the Bill. Having listened to hon. Members, it is quite clear that that is the purpose of the Bill.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): No.

Mr. Alexander: My hon. Friend says no. I am not trying to suggest that all hon. Members have that purpose, but many people do, including some of the promoters of the Bill.

I was sorry to learn that, before the drafting of the Bill, Parents Against Tobacco made no approach to discuss with the tobacco industry how proper safeguards such as those in the Bill could be more usefully improved. Instead, all we have had in its briefings is emotive and often inappropriate language against the tobacco industry. The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), to whose speech I listened with great care and interest, said that the tobacco industry gets £90 million a year from the sale of tobacco to children. It might have been more helpful and honest if PAT, which presumably briefed the hon. Gentleman with that statistic, pointed out that that £90 million is out of a total of £7,500 million a year. It might have been more helpful and honourable if it had also pointed out that 73 per cent. of that £90 million goes to the Exchequer.

From my study of the tobacco industry, I believe that it has done the most to prevent the sale of tobacco to children. Since 1986, the industry has conducted a campaign reminding retailers of their duties under the law. That campaign has cost £3·5 million. We have heard reference to the poster campaign—"Cigarettes cannot be sold to under-16s. Don't send your kids to buy your cigarettes." What more can the industry do to point out to retailers the necessity to obey the law in that regard?

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health will confirm that the industry has been most helpful in doing what it can to make sure that retailers obey the law and that, as far as possible, young people under 16 are not able to buy cigarettes. That campaign must demonstrate that the industry is aware of the problem, that it is not against more effective law enforcement, but that it is against the introduction of anti-smoking legislation under a different guise.

Much of what is contained in the Bill is already an offence under existing legislation. For example, clause 2 states that it shall be an offence to sell cigarettes from a vending machine to someone under the age of 16. That is already an offence. Most such machines are on licensed premises or are under the direct control of the vendor. Presumably the sponsors feel that there is a danger of easy access to such machines by young children. That may be the case from time to time. By and large, cigarette machines are so valuable and so full of cigarettes and cash that it is made absolutely sure that they are under the direct eye of the vendor. Retailers' biggest problem with cigarette machines is theft. They will not be uncaring about whether people under the age of 16 have unlawful access to them. If there are any that are not properly supervised, the law already states that the local authority can bring the vendor to court and order the removal of the machines. Again, it is a matter of enforcement rather than a question whether the law is adequate.

Clause 5 states:

> "No advertisement for tobacco or for any tobacco sponsored event shall be displayed. . . within any premises. . . in such a way as to allow the advertisement to be visible from the exterior of the premises; or. . .on the exterior. . . or within the boundaries, of any such premises".

That is already strictly controlled, on a voluntary basis, by the industry. I had hoped that the sponsors of the Bill and those who briefed them would acknowledge that.

I part company with some hon. Members who have spoken about tobacco advertising. I do not believe that tobacco advertising has any significant effect on inducing children to smoke. They will not start smoking because tobacco advertising companies sponsor a pop concert or a sporting event. Tobacco advertising is not intended to encourage youngsters to smoke; it is intended to persuade adult smokers to use one brand rather than another.

A report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys published only last year said that, while awareness of cigarette advertising is associated with a slightly increased likelihood of starting to smoke in the future, the effect is small in comparison with some of the other influences on children, such as the example set by parents and other children.

I have no quarrel with the basic objection to children under 16 smoking. It has always been an adult habit and

I hope that it will always remain so. My knowledge of the tobacco industry leads me to believe that that is also its hope. It is the underlying hostility to smoking in general to which I take objection. I respect people's wishes and views, even though I disagree with them. I also object to the intemperate language about people who smoke and the lack of consultation with the industry on how the law should be best enforced. Those are some of my reservations about the Bill.

2.3 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): The House will not be surprised to see my name as a sponsor of the Bill. It will be well aware that for some years I have been chairman of the all-party ASH group. In fact, I relinquished that office only a few days ago, when I passed the torch to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos). Those hon. Members who heard his speech will know that that torch is in good hands.

I was interested to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) about the tobacco industry's view of its campaign, which I acknowledge, to persuade retailers to obey the law. If it is anxious that the law should be upheld, I do not understand why it objects to the Bill, the whole purpose of which is to ensure that the law is properly and adequately enforced.

Until about an hour ago, I thought that the debate had been characterised by balanced and well-informed speeches, but I had to alter my view after I had heard the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman). For a start, she might read the Bill and see what is in it, rather than simply tell us what she thinks is in it. It is a great pity that she appeared to go out of her way to misrepresent the aims, objectives and background of and support enjoyed by Parents Against Tobacco. I also regret her comments about ASH. She misrepresented the views and backgrounds of the two organisations and it seems that she is literally ignorant of them. Indeed, it seems that she was prepared to admit that ignorance. She does not know what their backgrounds are, who supports them and the nature of their aims. Apparently she does not want to know. It is sad that any Member of this place should take that stance.

Mrs. Gorman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Sims: No. I shall not give way to my hon. Friend because I intend to speak for only a few more minutes. I have been asked to be brief. I am sorry. My hon. Friend said her piece with some vigour and at some length.

I join others in congratulating the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on introducing the Bill. He is a man of wide interests and is no stranger to controversy. Having won first place in the ballot, he could have adopted one of a number of issues. I am especially pleased that he decided to promote this Bill. I join others in congratulating PAT and its director, Jane Dunmore, on the responsible, moderate and effective campaign that they have waged. PAT has achieved its first object in securing first place in the ballot through the hon. Member for Warley, East. I hope that it will achieve its second object, which is to make the Bill an Act.

My position on tobacco is well known. I start with the fact—it is well established, whatever my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay may say—that it is literally a deadly product. Various figures have been quoted and I shall not repeat them. I merely invite the House to remember that during today about 300 people will probably die prematurely through smoking-related diseases.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to remind the House of the advice of the Government's chief medical officer who has said that tobacco is the greatest cause of avoidable death. My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) sought to draw a distinction between tobacco and heart disease as potential causes of death. The House may wish to know that the Government accept the advice of the Royal College of Physicians that smoking causes roughly 20 per cent. of all deaths that are ultimately recorded as being caused by heart disease.

Mr. Sims: My hon. Friend has made a brief but helpful contribution to the debate. The facts and figures to which he referred could not have come from a better source.

If tobacco had only just been discovered, it would never be allowed on the market. We must be realistic, however, and accept that it exists. I believe that it is the Government's duty to persuade smokers to give up the habit and to dissuade others from starting to smoke. There are a number of ways of doing that and some of them have been discussed today.

People such as my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay will argue that I and others are trying to impose restrictions on freedom. She argues that individuals should be free to make their own judgments. That is not an argument which I accept. I believe that my hon. Friend and others would find themselves on different ground if they pursued their argument and extended it to drugs and the ingredients of foodstuffs. If they are making a fair comment in respect of adults, that cannot be accepted when it comes to children. Surely it is the duty of us all to protect children's health. The Bill would be an effective means of doing that.

I hope that we shall have a worthwhile series of debates in Committee. I am pleased that there is good will on the part of my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench and the hon. Member for Warley, East and a willingness to give and take. I am sure that at the end of the day we shall have an effective and workable Act. I hope that the House will give the Bill an unopposed Second Reading.

2.8 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I shall not detain the House unduly. I wish to say in a short speech that I am opposed to the Bill in principle as well as in detail.

I acknowledge the views that have been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House to the effect that the Bill might proceed in Committee, when we can discuss a number of issues with which I am concerned.

I am against the Bill in principle because I believe it to be unnecessary. I agree that children under the age of 16 years should not and must not smoke. It is illegal for such children to smoke. Therefore, we should be concerned about the enforcement of existing legislation. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) has already pointed out that if something is illegal by virtue of existing legislation passed by the House, but the law is still being broken, we should either consider the enforceability of that law or the need to increase penalties

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for breaking that law. Certainly the penalties for selling cigarettes to children under 16 would be increased in the Bill, but my hon. Friend the Minister has said that they were due to increase anyway as a result of the Criminal Justice Bill now before the House.

If I am fortunate enough to serve on the Committee on the Bill I shall outline many of the reasons behind my detailed opposition to it—they are similar to those outlined by my hon. Friend the Minister. I share his concern about local authorities acting as policemen because those authorities are already complaining enough about the burdens imposed upon them by the House. It is clear that local authorities would have to receive vastly increased resources to police the Bill. New section 7(1H) of the 1933 Act states that:

"It shall be the duty of every local authority to publish an annual report".

New section 7 (1I) states:

"In this section—'local authority' means . . . a county, district . . .'

I have a county council and a district council. Does the Bill mean that both authorities would have a duty to police the hapless retailer? That is a good Committee point, which I shall not pursue further. I am also concerned, however, about vending machines and in Committee I would support any amendment that my hon. Friend the Minister might table.

My other major concern relates to clause 5 and tobacco advertisements. I find it incredible that an Act of Parliament would seek to ban the type of illuminated signs provided by tobacco companies that one often sees on the exterior of tobacconists or newsagents. It is a ridiculous idea. If my hon. Friend the Minister does not table an amendment to delete clause 5(1)(a) and (b) I shall certainly do so.

There are a number of detailed reasons why I should seek to amend the Bill in Committee, but, if I had my way, the Bill would not pass into law.

2.12 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I shall detain the House for five to 10 minutes only. I welcome the initiative behind the Bill to try to combat the serious problem of the illegal sale of cigarettes to people under 16.

We can all think back to our teenage years when our parents tried to ensure that we did not smoke—rightly so. They would have been extremely concerned about people selling cigarettes to us if we had been foolish enough to attempt to buy them, given that that is against the law. There is a great deal of support throughout the country for addressing that problem. In that sense, I support the objective behind the Bill.

Unlike my hon. Friend the Minister, I also support the idea of increasing the maximum fine for selling cigarettes to people under 16. If a newsagent does not sell such cigarettes illegally he will not incur a fine. I understand that the Bill will increase the fine from £400 to £2,000, but that represents an increase in the maximum fine. Presumably the courts would have the flexibility to apply the maximum fine to someone who was a repeat offender. However, to increase the fine incurred by a newsagent or anyone else who sold cigarettes to people under 16 does not necessarily require a new Bill. That could easily be catered for in the Criminal Justice Bill—I am a member of the Standing Committee considering that—and would not necessarily mean a new Bill.

The newsagents who knowingly break the law are probably in a minority. However, the Bill goes over the top. I certainly could not support it on Second Reading in its current form and I should want major amendments in Committee in order to support it on Third Reading.

The first aspect with which I shall deal is vending machines. We should remember that cigarettes are a legal product. They are legally available for adults in a free society. It is clear from the way in which the Bill is worded that the real intent is not merely to try to safeguard those under 16 years of age, but to have a go at the tobacco industry and to try to reduce the availability of tobacco products. The Bill is a covert attempt to turn legality into quasi-legality. The way in which the Bill attempts to place unworkable and impractical responsibilities on people who happen to have vending machines on some part of their property is intolerable.

At the risk of causing a few smirks around the Chamber, this is like a Bill being presented to the House to make a local authority liable to court action if an under-16 went into a lavatory for which the authority had responsibility and bought condoms from a machine, given that it is illegal to have sexual intercourse under the age of 16. My objection to the Bill is that it seeks to do this for cigarettes. It is simply not acceptable and it would be unfair, unrealistic and unworkable if the Bill in its present form became law, because of its intentions on the sale of cigarettes through vending machines. I am saying this as a non-smoker, as an hon. Member with no constituency interest in employment in the tobacco industry and as an impartial and objective observer on whether this part of the Bill is workable and desirable.

Another part of the Bill that is intolerable is the attempt to place more prohibitions on advertising of tobacco products. In a free society there should not merely be freedom of speech for the individual, but freedom of commercial speech for those who wish to advertise products that are legally available to adults who wish to purchase them. It would be deceitful for me and for the House to enact the Bill unamended because we would considerably reduce the freedom of commercial speech regarding a product that is legal. Parliament has not in any way suggested that adults should not be allowed to purchase it.

If a product is legal, and therefore available for purchase, clearly people who wish to increase their market share of the product should be able to advertise it. Advertising, whether of a brand of cigarette or of a motor vehicle, does not do much to alter total market size. Clearly, the total market for cigarettes is on the decrease and it will probably continue to decline due to a change in the public's attitude towards smoking for many reasons. Advertising enables producers to try to grab a bigger market share of the total market place. Because Vauxhall has an especially good advert for the Astra on television does not mean that more people will buy motor cars. It is more likely to mean that more people will buy Astras and fewer people will buy Escorts or Renaults.

To return to vending machines, one has to consider the practicalities of enforcing the provisions of the Bill, which provides that newsagents who sell products to people under 16—magazines, newspapers and sweets among others—would have perpetually to ensure that those

children, who have a perfect right to be in the shop, do not nip over to a vending machine while they are serving someone at the counter, and take out a product that they may not necessarily be intending to use but may be buying for their parents, or for a brother or sister. That is intolerable, as is the attack on the freedom of commercial speech and advertising, which is paranoid and spurious. I do not think that it would have much effect on the extent to which the under-16s smoke or the extent to which smoking materials are sold to them.

It is worth noting that the industry itself has spent £3·5 million over the past four years urging proprietors not to sell cigarettes to under-16s. The industry does not take the problem lightly and I do not feel that the Bill in its present form constitutes a just reward for its genuine attempts to solve that problem.

I do not intend to oppose the Bill on Second Reading; nor do I intend to speak for much longer. If, however, the Bill is not substantially altered in Committee and if its attitudes towards vending machines, the freedom of commercial advertising and the inflicting of unworkable and unrealistic duties on local authorities are not subjected to the same process I shall certainly not be able to support it on Third Reading.

The Bill addresses a problem, but it tends to blow up that problem out of all proportion. Its proposals are, as I said, neither realistic nor practicable and tread on the toes of what I consider important principles in a free society. We are all concerned about the issues with which it deals —I know that many of my constituents are—but it is badly thought out and shows no sense of proportion in regard to either the problem or the solutions that we must find if we are able to reduce it substantially over the coming decade.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Radioactive Material (Road Transport) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

2.24 pm

Mr. Dudley Fishburn (Kensington): The purpose of this modest though important Bill is to replace the Radioactive Substances Act 1948 with a modern set of powers. They will enable the Secretary of State for Transport to implement the International Atomic Energy Agency's regulations for the safe transport of radioactive materials —something which his present powers will not allow him to do in full.

Well over 500,000 packages of radioactive material are transported by road in Britain each year. The Bill seeks to regulate the conditions under which these packages are moved about. Most of them are transported to hospitals, others go to industry and a few of the larger shipments are sent by road to fuel nuclear reactors.

The IAEA is a specialist agency of the United Nations in Vienna and advises on all aspects of the civil nuclear industry. The IAEA regulations for the safe transport of radioactive material set out minimum standards for its transport by road. They also set out the necessary testing procedures and labelling requirements.

The regulations were last revised in 1985. All member states of the International Atomic Energy Agency are under an obligation to implement the regulations, by way of domestic legislation, as soon as possible. The deadline set was 1990. Britain failed to meet that deadline. My Bill puts that right. I commend it to the House.

2.26 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Christopher Chope): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Mr. Fishburn) on securing a Second Reading of the Bill and I express my full support for his efforts. The Bill intends simply to bring up to date my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport's powers to make regulations governing the transport of radioactive material by road and his ability to enforce the regulations. As my hon. Friend has already said, the Bill will allow the Secretary of State to comply with the United Kingdom's obligations as a member state of the International Atomic Energy Agency to——

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): For the sake of the record and given the short time available for the debate, may I say that the Opposition support the main thrust of the Bill. We should have liked to raise a number of issues today. If, however, the Bill is given a Second Reading and is considered in Committee, we shall raise our concerns there.

Mr. Chope: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington joins me in thanking the hon. Lady for her very encouraging comments.

The Bill is intended to cover only road transport. Provisions already exist in other legislation that allow the Secretary of State to control the transport of radioactive material by rail, air and sea. These provisions are specific to the mode of transport and therefore cannot be used for regulating road transport.

At present, the transport by road of radioactive material is controlled by regulations made under

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provisions contained in the Radioactive Substances Act 1948. These provisions have become outdated in the modern world, where the use of radioactive materials for medical and industrial purposes far exceeds those originally envisaged when the Act was passed in 1948. It is essential that the Secretary of State has sufficient powers available to him to control the traffic in radioactive material. The Bill will provide those powers. I ask the House to support the Bill and give it a Second Reading.

The House will recall that when the Bill was before the House during the last Session it did not get through because of a technical hitch at a very late stage, even though it enjoyed the support of most hon. Members. One of the issues raised during its Committee stage last Session was whether the Bill should apply to Northern Ireland. It does now apply to Northern Ireland. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Employment (Upper Age Limits in Advertisements) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Objection cannot be taken at this stage.

Mr. Winnick: The Bill would ensure that advertisements for employment cannot specify age. To discriminate on the ground of age is as wrong as discrimination on any other grounds.

I do not see that this modest Bill should be opposed by the Government——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on 1 March.

Human Rights Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Now, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman moving the Second Reading on behalf of the hon. Member in charge of the Bill?

Mr. Winnick: I am, Sir.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till 25 January.

Licensing Reform Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till 1 February.

Declaration of War (Requirement for Parliamentary Approval) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Not moved.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 21st January, the Motions in the name of Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection, relating to Health and to Social Security may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and, if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at that hour, any Amendments to the first Motion which may have been selected by Mr. Speaker may then be moved, and the Questions thereon shall be put forthwith, and Mr. Speaker shall then put forthwith successively the Question on the said Motion, or Motion as amended, and the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the other Motion, which may then be made, and of any Amendments thereto which may have been selected by him, which may then be moved; and, notwithstanding the practice of the House, each such Motion shall be regarded as a single Motion.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 22nd January, the Motions in the name of Mr. John MacGregor relating to European Standing Committees and to European Community Documents may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon; and, if proceedings thereon have not been disposed of at that hour, any Amendments to the first Motion which may have

been selected by Mr. Speaker may then be moved, and the Question thereon shall be put forthwith, and Mr. Speaker shall then put forthwith successively the Question on the said Motion, or Motion as amended, and the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the other Motion, which may then be made, and of any Amendments thereto which may have been selected by him, which may then be moved.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 23rd January, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders Nos. 14 (Exempted business) and 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)), Mr. Speaker shall, three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Lang relating to Housing (Scotland), if those proceedings have not been previously disposed of, put the Question already proposed from the Chair; and shall then put forthwith successively the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the other such Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Lang and Mr. Neil Kinnock, which may then be moved; and proceedings on the said Motions may continue after the expiration of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At some stage, may we be given some advice on the procedure at 2.30 pm on a Friday? I had a minute or two —I am not complaining about that as I was 15th in the private Member's ballot—but it is unfortunate that when a Whip, carrying out his duty, shouts "Object" it means, in effect, that I do not have the opportunity to advance a case for my Bill. Surely a procedure could be considered —*[Interruption.]* I do not know what all this muttering is about. Even if hon. Members disagree with me, the Bill is worthy of debate. Under the procedure that we have had for years, when a Whip shouts "Object" the House is denied the opportunity of discussing the merits of a Bill. That is unfair.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point?

Mr. Arnold: Yes. Is not it a fact that the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) talked out his Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is the first point. The hon. Gentleman talked out the Bill. We have discussed the 2.30 pm procedure many times in previous Sessions. We are using a well-established procedure. An objection at 2.30 pm does not necessarily mean an objection to the principle of the Bill but an objection to the Bill going through on the nod without debate. As has been said from the Chair on many occasions, if the hon. Gentleman is dissatisfied with the procedure, he can, yet again, ask the Select Committee on Procedure to consider the matter.

Audit Commission

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

2.32 pm

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling): In spite of the momentous events taking place elsewhere, I am pleased to move this debate on extending the role of the Audit Commission.

The Audit Commission is now nearly eight years old. It is one of the most important and effective innovations that we have introduced into the machinery of government. Its success and usefulness is underlined by the fact that even the Labour party acknowledges its value.

Political debate frequently centres on how much money is spent on our public services, but insufficient attention is paid to value-for-money considerations. In many areas of public expenditure, we must focus greater attention on the effectiveness of public spending. Input is extremely important; output is vital. The Audit Commission addresses exactly that point. It is the enemy of waste and inefficiency and the taxpayers' best friend.

The purpose of this Adjournment debate is to place on record the great value that has been derived already from the Audit Commission's work, particularly in its value-for-money studies. If my hon. Friend the Minister takes the same view as I do about that, my second aim today is to press him to explore other aspects where the skills and efforts of the Audit Commission may usefully be deployed. I should also like the House to recognise the skill that has been shown and the success that has been achieved by the current controller of the Audit Commission, Howard Davies, and his predecessor, John Banham.

The Audit Commission should not be seen in any negative or cost-cutting sense. As the commission said, value for money is not simply a matter of economy, of cutting either the quality or the scale of the services provided. Value-for-money opportunities identified can either improve existing services or channel additional funds to other worthwhile policy objectives. It is important to note that in the past the commission criticised central Government where some national policies made it difficult for local authorities to manage their affairs efficiently. That was why some of my hon. Friends and I fought so hard during the passage of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill last year to allow the commission to comment on the effect that ministerial directives on health could have throughout the health service. It must be said that the Department of Health did not at the time regard this as high a priority as my hon. Friends and I did, and we were pleased when my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State accepted our argument on Report.

I should like particularly to draw the attention of the House to the commission's report last October on day care surgery. That report demonstrated that waiting lists could be cut by one third through more efficient use of day surgery. How did it reach that excellent and helpful conclusion? It certainly was not armchair guesswork or political fantasy. The Audit Commission focused on a basket of 20 common operations which account for about 30 per cent. of all surgery. If all district health authorities used day care treatment to the same extent as the 25 per cent. that use it most, an additional 186,000 patients could

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be treated in England and Wales every year at no extra cost. Many other operations are suitable for day care treatment, offering the potential for an estimated 300,000 additional places per year. This is no dry analysis. It means that an increase in activity of this sort could have a significant impact on waiting times for all types of surgery, thus helping many of our constituents who are kept waiting too long for the health care that they need.

It is also worth mentioning the report entitled "Making a Reality of Community Care". That particularly important report made a valuable contribution—indeed, an essential one—to the work that Sir Roy Griffiths carried out on care in the community. He cited that work many times in his report on this subject.

However, it is in the area of local government that the Audit Commission has achieved most. One statistic suffices to demonstrate that point. It is interesting to note that in 1988 the commission reported that £750 million of savings had been identified, of which just under a third had been realised. By March 1990, the saving identified had reached £1,350 million and over £670 million had been achieved.

One of the commission's best reports entitled "Managing Social Services for the Elderly More Effectively" demonstrated clearly that the work undertaken was not about cost cutting but about ensuring that the right people received the right service. It demonstrated that there was a critical need for efficient management systems if clients were to be properly looked after. The report addressed itself to the elected members of a local authority to ensure that they had the right tools and benchmarks against which to judge and assess the performance of their officers. The report did a great deal to promote efficiency and effectiveness in local government. Indeed, I am proud that my local authority, Gedling, regularly receives warm praise from the Audit Commission. This is a credit to the leader of the council, Robert Baird-Parker, and his colleagues and to the chief executive, Bill Brown, and his officers and staff.

More recently, the Audit Commission produced a most helpful report on the cost of absence through sickness to the local authorities. That report deserves far more prominence than it has received so far; what it showed was nothing short of a thorough-going scandal in local government. Absence through sickness in the London boroughs was twice the CBI's national average and these figures, bad as they are, were bolstered by generous terms and conditions of employment.

Before the Audit Commission started its investigation, many authorities had no idea of their sickness levels. Lambeth council was so appalled when it learned from the Audit Commission of its figure that it changed its system and introduced a number of new measures, which promptly caused a strike. It emerged that Brent was losing £8 million a year through sickness.

This is the measure of the value of the survey. If London boroughs controlled their absence through sickness at the level of the national average, the community charge in London would be £25 a head lower. It is now up to local government to benefit those whom it represents by taking action as a result of the Audit Commission's work.

I shall mention several areas in which I want the work of the Audit Commission to be extended or deployed and in which I believe that better value for money, efficiency and effectiveness could be achieved if it were. The first is the police. We have increased funding for the police enormously in recent years and the police have become more efficient. That is true of nowhere more than Nottinghamshire, where we have an excellent force under the leadership of Dan Crompton. However, there are legitimate doubts about how effectively the police use the resources more generally.

A recent Audit Commission report, entitled "Improving the Performance of the Finger Print Service", demonstrated a huge variety in the cost of running different finger printing bureaux, sometimes varying by a factor of six. The report demonstrates the wide variations in effectiveness in terms of convictions secured through finger print evidence. It varies from 75 convictions per officer down to only four per officer per year. That is a staggering difference by any yardstick.

Although the Audit Commission has power to look at provincial forces, it is not allowed to look at the Metropolitan police. Why not? Are we saying that the Audit Commission's disciplines are necessary for the provincial police, but not for the Met? I think not. The Home Secretary should open up the Met to the Audit Commission's scrutiny. I hope that my hon. Friend will not say that the Met is different from provincial police forces because it is not under local control and, therefore, does not come within the powers of scrutiny of the Audit Commission. That point was dispensed with last year when its powers were extended into the national health service. Those powers can and should be extended elsewhere.

Last month, the commission produced another worthwhile report on the police which showed major weaknesses in police monitoring of their own performance. The report, entitled "Effective Policing—Performance Review in Police Forces", concluded that definitions of good policing are not sufficiently backed by an assessment of police performance. It also recommended that police authorities and chief constables should develop a national framework to allow comparisons between forces. The measurement of police performance is no easy matter, but there can be no excuse for failing to make the attempt. The report goes on to recommend a better system of monitoring clear-up rates—an approach which could allow a far closer analysis of the methods used to solve crimes and their progress through the judicial system.

Let us consider magistrates courts. The efficiency unit scrutiny of magistrates courts identified, among other things, an audit gap—no one actually looked at them to see how well or badly they used their funds. Whatever is decided by the Government about magistrates courts and whether they become a "next steps" agency as suggested by the efficiency unit or not, they would benefit from the Audit Commission's attentions. Indeed, I believe that some local authorities have asked that the Audit Commission do just that. But as yet it is not empowered to do so. There is considerable public concern about the speed and efficiency of our courts and the police are concerned about that, too. We need to consider the location of the courts and the costs associated with that. If the Audit Commission deploys its skills on the magistrates courts, we shall, I suspect, save a fortune.

It is the declared intention of the Government that the housing associations should take a greater role in providing public housing. However, it is obvious that some provide this service far more effectively and efficiently than others. I should like the Audit Commisison to deploy its skills to enable the public and Parliament to see clearly what best practice in our housing associations is and how near to providing best value for money the housing associations that, for example, serve my constituents, come to achieving that aim. We need a proper, comparative, intrusive audit of the housing associations to ensure that they are spending the vast sums of public money as effectively as possible, not least because, at the moment, the same body that funds them audits them. That is not in anyone's interest and means that there is no independent scrutiny. There are many other obvious sectors, such as universities, where perennial financial difficulties need closer public scrutiny.

So far, about 50 schools have decided to opt out of local education Authority control. I believe that there will, and should, be many more. Schools are better placed than local education authorities to decide how to spend their budgets in the best interests of the children they are educating. In due course, we should let the Audit Commission take a look at some of the new management and educational ideas implemented by opt-out schools. I suspect that those schools will be well managed and run and there may be valuable lessons for the LEAs to learn from them for schools that have decided not to opt out. The Audit Commission is the right organisation to assess and promote the lessons learnt.

I hope that we shall hear from my hon. Friend the Minister that he is receptive to the sort of ideas that I have outlined. It was not a long list and was far from comprehensive. Will he tell the House that he supports such ideas and encourage the Audit Commission to pursue and extend its excellent work in the directions that I have described? I hope that he will. The Audit Commission has a valuable role to play in securing better value for money in major sectors of public spending. Let the Minister make clear that he intends actively to encourage it in the extension of its existing operations.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert Key): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) for initiating this debate on the Audit Commission or, to give the commission its full title, the Audit Commission for Local Authorities and the National Health Service in England and Wales. I emphasise the full title because it underlines the remarks of my hon. Friend. Gedling is fortunate to have my hon. Friend as its Member of Parliament and my hon. Friend is fortunate to have, in Gedling borough council, a well-run local authority. I have no difficulty—indeed, I am delighted to join him—in thanking and congratulating the comptroller of the Audit Commission, Howard Davies, and his predecessor, John Banham.

The Audit Commission has a long history—longer than most people realise—of first-class work. The origin of the Audit Commission lies in the Poor Law (Amendment) Act 1844, which established a system for auditing poor law expenditure and thus created the office of district auditor. In the second half of the 19th century new types of local authority organisations were created and their accounts were gradually made subject to district audit as their functions increased. Some parts of the accounts of boroughs and county boroughs were subject to elective audit: in 1933 those authorities were given the right to appoint either the district auditor or other qualified auditors. It was not until the Local Government Act 1972 that a common system of audit was put in place across all local authorities.

The 1972 Act introduced a right for each local authority to choose whether its accounts should be audited by a private firm of accountants—subject to ministerial approval—or by the district auditors.

In its first special report for 1980-81 the Public Accounts Committee recommended setting up a National Audit Office in which the district audit service and the Exchequer and Audit Department would be amalgamated under the control of the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Government rejected that recommendation as inconsistent with the constitutional position of local authorities, but accepted the need for improvement in the arrangements for local authority audit and for greater attention to value-for-money work. Value for money is important and often misunderstood. Value for money implies and means "value for people". The better the value for money that local authorities and central Government can achieve, the better the value for the people they are serving. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling said, the Audit Commission's statutory responsibility, including helping local authorities achieve better value for money, was an innovative measure which has been of great significance in improving the performance of local authorities for the benefit of their local public.

The most recent development in the role of the Audit Commission was the extension of its remit to cover health service organisations, brought about under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks about the amendment to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. Although the Government could not agree completely with the full force of the initial suggestions he supported, there was no doubt that the revision, which was fully included in the Act with his support, was most helpful. It allows the Audit Commission to set out clearly the national framework within which the NHS operates as it undertakes its value-for-money studies under section 26 of the Local Government Finance Act 1982.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the work undertaken by the commission on day surgery in the national health service. That was the first report that it published on NHS matters, although this week it has been joined by further work on pathology services. He is right to congratulate the commission on pursuing the prospect for further value-for-money opportunities in those areas and we look forward to the results of the local audits now being undertaken which will establish what can be done in each local area to contribute to cost-improvement programmes, and what the scope for development nationally is likely to be.

I agree with my hon. Friend's assessment of the importance of the Audit Commission report "Making A Reality of Community Care". Sir Roy Griffiths's report "Community Care: Agenda for Action" contained proposals largely accepted by this Government in formulating the community care policy outlined in the

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White Paper "Caring for People". Indeed, Sir Roy Griffiths acknowledged the Audit Commission report as containing

"the essential facts on which this review is based".

My hon. Friend has rightly emphasised the value-for-money work undertaken by the Audit Commission, but that is only one part of its responsibilities. It is worth reminding ourselves also that much of the Audit Commission's work is performed or given effect by the auditor appointed to each body.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: My hon. Friend has made an extremely important point which bears underlining. When the Audit Commission commissions a report it does not take on the staff itself. It employs third parties and other bodies to carry out that work. I believe that that is one of the most cost-effective ways of achieving the result that we all seek.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is right. The Audit Commission appoints auditors. It also prepares and keeps under review a code of audit practice and it prescribes the scale of audit fees. It can also direct an extraordinary audit in appropriate circumstances.

The main statutory responsibilities and powers of the auditors are to check that the authority's accounts have been prepared in accordance with statutes and regulations in force, and that proper practices have been observed; to satisfy themselves that the authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources; and to comply with the code of audit practice.

I had the duty of moving the adoption of the code when it was considered by the Second Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments on 21 November last. That was the Audit Commission's code and it duly met with approval. It was noteworthy that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) supported the Audit Commission's role and the auditors whom it appoints. He said:

"There has been no conflict between the Government and the Opposition about the role of the audit service. There is no contention between us . . . It has never been an issue between the Government and ourselves that the audit service is a vital part of the propriety that we expect from local government".

The hon. Member for Brightside went on to consider, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling did, one aspect of the future role of the Audit Commission. The hon. Member for Brightside said that he believed that

"quality, efficiency and effectiveness should replace economy, efficiency and effectiveness; as quality rather than cheapness should be the benchmark by which we judge what we are getting for our money."—[*Official Report, Second Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments*, 21 November 1990; c. 6-7.]

The same idea of seeking quality was made one of the themes of a lecture that the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) gave on 2 July 1990 as the second in the series of lectures on management of public services. He said:

"Quality cannot be had on the cheap. That we need a sustained period of more effective financial investment in our public services and the people employed therein is self evident. Recognising that cash will always be limited we accept the essential drive for greater financial rigour and regard that rather than cheapness for its own sake as a far better approach. If quality is our goal then efficiency is essential."

I do not disagree with the intention behind those remarks, but I believe that quality can be achieved and is being achieved within the present framework. The code of audit practice is perfectly clear about that. It states:

"It is not the auditor's function to question policy. There is, however, a responsibility, particularly in the audit of local authorities, to consider the effects of policy and to examine the arrangements by which policy decisions are reached".

My interpretation of the guidelines, which I was pleased to bring before the Committee, is that a local authority may quite properly decide what levels or quality of service to provide, but it is up to the auditor to ensure that the decision was taken in full knowledge of the financial and other consequences. I do not see that the role of the Audit Commission and the auditors that it appoints needs to be widened by legislative means. The ideas of my hon. Friend and the two hon. Members whom I have quoted can be accommodated in the present framework and I think that such ideas on quality are already being accommodated. My hon. Friend referred to the report entitled "Managing Social Services for the Elderly More Effectively" as a report which shows how a chosen level of service can be targeted to deliver the right service to the right people.

I shall now say a word about evenness and quality across the country and the spread of best practice. The quality exchange is an Audit Commission initiative to establish voluntary "comparison levels" for local authorities. The commission's first reports, which covered the seven services of refuse collection, waste disposal, highway maintenance, street cleaning, verge cutting, street lighting and gully cleaning, showed that many councils were already doing a lot to monitor and promote service quality. Nearly 200 local authorities participated in the survey. The Audit Commission's report on it highlighted the importance of four factors—management arrangements, specifications, quality control and customer satisfaction.

Some of the commission's findings may come as no surprise—many local authorities could do much more to keep their tenants' rent arrears under control, for example. Nevertheless, those points need to be made and I am sure that the objective and practical advice offered by the commission is of help to many authorities.

The Audit Commission's recent report on managing sickness absence, to which my hon. Friend referred, revealed the alarming statistics of sickness absence in certain local authorities in London. The report stated that if the six authorities with the worst sickness record in London could reduce levels of such absence to the CBI average for industry, they could save as much as £26 million, or £27 per head on the community charge. The loss to other authorities through that source is not, thankfully, quite as great, but the problem is severe and cannot be measured in financial terms alone. High levels of sickness absence can also lead to poorer services and breakdowns in management systems.

On the police aspects of the commission's work, in which, of course, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has the major Government interest, the commission's responsibilities for appointing auditors for local authorities extend to provincial police authorities and the commission is as concerned with recommending ways of improving the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of police forces as any of the other organisations. The remit does not extend to the Metropolitan police, because they are subject to audit by the National Audit Office.

In preparation for local audits of police forces, the commission has been conducting a special study based on fieldwork in several provincial forces. That study began three years ago and the commission has so far published eight papers, to some of which my hon. Friend has referred. I understand that the work continues and that a further two papers, one on management structure and resource allocation in provincial police forces and the other on devolved financial management, are due for publication within the next few months. The commission has also published two audit guides for use by the auditors whom it appoints.

Most of the recommendations are properly the province of chief constables and their police authorities, but the commission's work in this matter is, of course, of great interest to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

My hon. Friend suggests that the Home Secretary should open up the Met to the commission's scrutiny. The Met is different from provincial forces because the Home Secretary, rather than a local authority, is its police authority. Its auditing arrangements are different, too, being linked to those for central Government, with the National Audit Office appointing external auditors and publishing value-for-money reports.

Although I have explained the structural position, it is equally clear that the Metropolitan police benefit from the Audit Commission inquiries into provincial forces. The Metropolitan police force is not ignored, nor does it ignore the work of the Audit Commission.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: My hon. Friend the Minister has outlined the current structural position. As he will know, many hon. Members feel that the skills of the Audit Commission, which are not the same as those of the National Audit Office, are well deployed on all other provincial forces and would benefit the Met if they were deployed in there. My hon. Friend cannot give me a full answer today, but I hope that he and his colleagues in government will keep that point under active consideration because much public money would be saved if the Audit Commission were deployed in the Met.

Mr. Key: I undertake to draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

The scrutiny into the magistrates courts service, published in 1989, did point to weaknesses in the current arrangements for audit of expenditure on magistrates courts. Detailed consultation has taken place with the service and other interested parties on the main scrutiny proposal on the reorganisation of the service. I understand that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is now considering the results of the consultation and those of a recent costing exercise carried out by consultants.

My hon. Friend suggested also that the Audit Commission might extend its best practice and value-for-money role into the world of subsidised rented housing run by housing associations. I share my hon. Friend's view that effective management and value for money in that area are very important.

Housing associations already manage more than half a million homes in England and the Government are channelling an increasing amount of new investment through them. However, I am not sure that this is an area where an additional input from the commission is needed, certainly at the present time when there are many other priorities for its attention. However, I shall bear that point seriously in mind.

I come now to grant-maintained schools. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has now approved, or is minded to approve, 59 applications for grant-maintained status. It is proving popular with parents. Many of the first grant-maintained schools have seen dramatic increases in applications. I am sure that local education authorities and others will have much to learn from the success of the grant-maintained schools sector. The Audit Commission does not have the rights of access to grant-maintained schools, but I will draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the sort of points that my hon. Friend has made.

My hon. Friend has drawn attention to the many aspects of the work of the Audit Commission, which, because of its great variety, impinges on the responsibilities of a number of Departments. He has also praised the excellence of that work and I am happy to concur with him. As I said, the history of the service is one of steady evolution, which leads me to think that we should allow the Audit Commission to expand into its new role in regard to the national health service before thrusting new burdens on it. My hon. Friend has presented many important ideas, which it may be correct to adopt. For the moment I shall draw my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of my colleagues. I intend actively to encourage the Audit Commission in its existing areas of operation, including the development of new ideas on standards and quality of service.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 17 December 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Latent Damage Act

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Attorney-General if he will bring forward proposals to amend the Latent Damage Act 1986 in the light of recent House of Lords judgments.

The Attorney-General: The Government have no plans to bring forward proposals to amend the Latent Damage Act 1986.

National Union of Mineworkers

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Attorney-General whether the Serious Fraud Office has yet received a report from the Metropolitan police fraud squad of its inquiries into the affairs of the National Union of Mineworkers following the Lightman inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Yes. The Metropolitan police have been advised that the case does not fall within the statutory criteria for investigation by the Serious Fraud Office.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of the Lord Chancellor's Department or the Law Officers since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

The Attorney-General: There has been one public opinion survey since January 1985.

Between December 1988 and January 1989 a poll of 1,000 members of the public was conducted by Public Attitude Surveys Ltd. on behalf of the Law Commission. The survey sought to identify public attitudes to the current law on intestacy; and on the current grounds for divorce.

Information about internal opinion surveys is not held centrally in my Department or the Lord Chancellor's Department and the information could be acquired only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Forces

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what bids for increased manpower have been made by the chief constable of Derbyshire since 1987; and how many additional police officers have been appointed as a result.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Derbyshire police authority has made two applications since 1987. It applied for 34 additional posts for 1990-91 and was informed that it could have 19 extra posts subject to confirmation that it would meet its share of the cost. The police authority, however, declined to meet its share of the cost following community charge capping of the county council. The offer of the posts was, therefore, withdrawn. The police authority has made an application for 15 extra posts in 1991-92. This is being considered.

Homosexuality

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned for the offence of procuring the commission of homosexual acts contrary to section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967; and of those convicted and cautioned, how many were convicted or cautioned because the procuration related (i) to male homosexual prostitution, (ii) to the facilitation of homosexual acts not involving prostitution, and (iii) to the facilitation of homosexual acts which were otherwise lawful, in each year from 1980 to 1989;

(2) how many men over the age of 16 years were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned for the offence of committing a consensual homosexual act in private, but where one or more other persons were present in another part of the house or flat, contrary to section 1(2)*(a)* of the Sexual Offences Act 1967; and of those men convicted, how many were (i) fined, giving the 10 highest fines imposed, (ii) given a suspended sentence, giving the lengths of these suspended sentences in each case and (iii) imprisoned, giving the length of these custodial sentences in each individual case, for each year from 1980 to 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Information for 1980 to 1989 for males convicted and cautioned under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 is given in the table. Information is not collected on the circumstances of the offence. It is not possible from the information held centrally to identify the number of convictions and cautions for homosexual acts which were done when more than two persons took part or were present.

Number of males cautioned and convicted for offences under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 1980-1989: England and Wales

Year	Cautioned	Convicted
1980	—	2
1981	—	—
1982	—	—
1983	1	2
1984	1	—
1985	—	—
1986	—	—
1987	[1]—	—
1988	[1]—	4
1989	—	—

[1] unavailable.

Relate

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider increasing the grant to Relate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: As I announced in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) on 15 November at column *216*, marriage guidance organisations, including Relate, will receive an increase of approximately 10 per cent. of their existing grants in aid for the next financial year.

EC Citizens (Franchise)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to extend the franchise to citizens of EC countries who are permanently resident in the United Kingdom in both local and general elections.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Public Houses

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to bring forward legislation to introduce 24-hour opening in public houses.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Bangladesh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training has been given by United Kingdom police officers to police officers in Bangladesh in the last five years to date; what training has been received by Bangladeshi police officers in the United Kingdom over the same period; what was the nature of such training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no central record of any training having been given by United Kingdom police officers to police officers in Bangladesh in the last five years. The centrally recorded training received by Bangladeshi police officers in the United Kingdom in the same period is as follows:

1986
One officer attended the Overseas Command Course—Police Staff College, Bramshill.

1987
One officer attended the Senior Command Course and five officers attended the Overseas Command Course—Police Staff College, Bramshill.

1988
One officer attended a Scenes of Crime Course—Durham.
One officer attended the Overseas Command Course—Police Staff College, Bramshill.

1989
One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss Community Policing and Consultative Committees.
One officer attended a Fingerprint/Photography Course—Durham.
One officer attended a CID Course—West Yorkshire.
Two officers attended the Overseas Command Course—Police Staff College, Bramshill.

1990
One officer attended a CID Course—West Yorkshire.
One officer attended a Drug Detection Course—Lancashire.
One officer attended the Senior Command Course and three officers attended the Overseas Command Course—Police Staff College, Bramshill.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to require a reduction of 10 per cent. per annum in the number of animal procedures carried out in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: Provided that the requirements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are fulfilled, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will continue to grant project licences authorising particular programmes of work under section 5. The controls of the Act have themselves given continued impetus to the consistent decline in the use of living animals in scientific procedures which has taken place for a number of years. Overall reductions in the numbers of animals used depend heavily on scientific advances in the development of acceptable alternatives.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now develop a strategy for the promotion, development and use of non-animal research methods with a view to reducing the number of animal procedures.

Mrs. Rumbold: Much work is already being carried out by commercial companies, academic bodies and charitable concerns to find acceptable alternatives to the use of living animals in research. The Home Office has been funding research in this area since 1984 and established its own research scheme with the passing of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. This scheme is administered by the Animal Procedures Committee which advises my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on the priorities for research and assists in the selection and evaluation of proposals. Details of projects which have been funded by the Home Office may be found in the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 28 November at columns *416-17*.

Football Grounds (Licensing)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the date by which he expects the Football Licensing Authority to be in a position to issue licences for football grounds at which designated football matches are played.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Criminal Records

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all Home Office circulars which provide guidance to chief officers of police on the disclosure of information from criminal records.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Current guidance to chief officers of police on disclosure of information from criminal records is contained in Home Office circulars 45/1986, 8/1988, 101/1988, 102/1988 and 58/1989.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I will write to the hon. Member.

Football Licensing Authority

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the number of staff required to administer the football licensing scheme; what is the current staffing complement of the Football Licensing Authority; and what stage has been reached in filling any further vacancies required by the Football Licensing Authority.

Mr. John Patten: The number of staff that the Football Licensing Authority requires is a matter for the authority itself to determine. I understand, however, that the authority plans initially to employ a total of nine administrative staff and the equivalent of nine full-time inspectors; a complement which will be reviewed as the authority begins to discharge the full range of its statutory functions including the administration of the football licensing scheme. Three administrative staff are in post; the recruitment of inspectors and other administrative staff is in hand; and the authority expects all these staff will be in post by next spring.

DEFENCE

Helicopter Rescue Operations

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received over the availability of Royal Navy and RAF helicopters to rescue people or animals on Exmoor, the Bredon hills, the Quantocks and the Blackdowns in extremely adverse winter weather conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am not aware of any such representations.

Bangladesh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training has been given by United Kingdom military personnel to military personnel in Bangladesh in the last five years to date; what training has been received by Bangladeshi military personnel in the United Kingdom over same period; what was the nature of such training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Training provided for members of the Bangladeshi armed forces over the last five years, both in country and on training courses in the United Kingdom, has covered a variety of military subjects. Further details are confidential between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Bangladesh.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A list of opinion poll surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of the Ministry of Defence since 1985 is given in the table.

Subject	*Date*
Public Attitudes to Defence	Annual six monthly
Army Officer Recruitment: Strategy of Communication Research	1985
Navy Officer Communication Check 1985	1985
Territorial Army Monitor Stage 2 & 3 (later called 1 & 2, August and November 1985)	1985
Territorial Army Qualitative Research	1985
Telephone Response to TA Advertising: Communication Research	1985
Junior Leaders Recruitment—Advertising Communication Check	1985
1986 Army Officer Communication Research	1986
Navy Officer Films Research	1986
Territorial Army Monitor Stage 3 & 4 (August and November 1986)	1986
Territorial Army Officer Communication Check	1986
Territorial Army Advertising Campaign Communication Check	1986
RAF Computer Game Research	1986
Soldier Qualitative Research	1986
Survey of Armed Forces Resettlement Services 1986	1986
Scottish Infantry: Press Advertising Communication Check	1986
Soldier Recruitment Advertising—Qualitative Research on Strategy Development	1987
Territorial Army Recruitment Literature Development Research	1987
RAF Officer Recruitment Literature	1987
RAF Engineering Officers Campaign	1987
RAF Officer Advertising Research	1987
Army: Territorial Army General Press Campaign 1987-88	1987
Army: Terms of Engagement	1987
Survey of Armed Services Youth Training Scheme (ASYTS)	1987
Army Officers Press Advertising	1987
Britain in NATO: A study of Exhibition Visitors at 4 County Shows	1988
Potential Officers—Strategic Qualitative Research	1988
MOD (Navy) Trailer Crew Questionnaire	1988
Territorial Army: Advertising Research (Monitor Stages 5 and 6 January and March 1988)	1988
Territorial Army Officers Press Advertising Communication Check	1988
Army Interactive Video Assessment	1988
University Undergraduates—Service Officer Target Market Study	1988
Attitudes of the General Public—NELC 1988 Campaign Evaluation	1988
Managers' Attitudes—National Employers' Liaison CMTE Campaign Evaluation	1988
Soldier Concept Testing	1988
Army Officers Image/Strategic Planning for Advertising	1988
Army Engineers—Advertising Concept Testing	1988
Public Images of the RAF-Quantitative Stage (and Qualitative Study)	1988
WRAF Concept Testing Qualitative	1988
RAF Ground Trades Other Ranks Recruitment Qualitative Research	1988
Ulster Defence Regiment—Qualitative Research (Spring 1988)	1988
National Employers Liaison Committee Advertising Communication Check	1988
Navy Qualitative Evaluation and Strategic Research	1989
Army Officer Advertising: Communication Research	1989
Army Tracking 1989-90 (Stages I and II)	1989
One Army: Pre and Post Evaluation of Awareness and Attitudes	1989
Territorial Army Advertising Monitor	1989
National Employers Liaison Committee Campaign Tracking	1989
Regular Army Creative Development Research	1989
Royal Navy Tracking	1989
NELC Qualitative Advertising Campaign Evaluation	1989
RAF Officer Recruitment Creative Development Research	1989
Other Ranks Planning Research	1989
Royal Navy Ratings Recruitment (Advertising Research)	1989
Army Information Fulfilment: Follow-up Research	1989
Royal Navy Research Monitor 1990	1990
Queen Alexandra Royal Nursing Corps Officer Research	1990
Army Tracking Stages III and IV	1990
Survey of Undergraduates Attitudes to Careers	1990

Subject	*Date*
Territorial Army 1990 Campaign Evaluation Research	1990
Territorial Army Advertising Review Part One	1990
National Employers Liaison Committee Advertising Tracking Stage 3	1990
Royal Navy Communications Check	1990
Army Recruitment Advertising Research	1990
RAF Creative Development	1990

Naval Vessels (Women Reporters)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Navy commander in the Gulf has had any instructions on allowing women reporters on naval vessels.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No such instructions have been issued. Both female and male reporters are permitted, depending on the facilities available, to go on board Royal Navy vessels serving in the Gulf.

Operation Granby

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet completed his consideration of the selective use of reservists in connection with Operation Granby, following his remarks in the House on 11 December, *Official Report*, column 908.

Mr. Tom King: Up to about 1,500 reservists with specialist skills will be required in support of British deployments to the Gulf. There has been a most encouraging response to my call for volunteers with relevant medical training and experience, but this has fallen short of our requirement. Many have felt unable to commit themselves because there is no legal protection for the jobs of those who volunteer.

It remains my aim to meet our requirement for reservists with individuals who express a willingness to serve, but I believe that it is essential that those volunteering should have their jobs protected. To this end, Her Majesty the Queen, in exercise of the powers conferred upon her by section 10 of the Reserve Forces Act 1980, has today, by order signified under my hand, authorised the calling out of the reserve forces. This will enable the selective call-out of members of the Army Reserve, the Territorial Army, the Air Force Reserve, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, the Royal Navy Reserve including the Royal Fleet Reserve and the special class of the Royal Fleet Reserve, and the Royal Marines Reserve.

I intend now to call again for volunteers in the necessary categories, either to serve in the Gulf, or in the United Kingdom or Germany, in order to release other personnel for the Gulf. It will be made clear to those who volunteer that they will be formally called out under the Reserve Forces Act 1980, which will provide a call-out gratuity and legal protection for their jobs. As an additional measure, a supplement of up to 20 per cent. —and more in special cases—will be paid to those reservists called out to make up any difference between their civilian earnings and their military pay.

If, in spite of these measures, insufficient volunteers come forward, I will need to call out individual ex-Regular reservists compulsorily. Most of the reservists will be required to report at the beginning of the new year. In view of the Christmas period and my desire to provide the maximum possible warning, individual reservists will be notified now of the possibility that they may be called out compulsorily.

In addition to this requirement for medical reservists, a small number of reservists with other specialist skills may be needed. I would also aim to meet this requirement with volunteers, although those coming forward would be called out formally under section 10 of the Reserve Forces Act so that their service could be placed on a similar basis.

THE ARTS

Arts Expenditure

30. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister for the Arts how proposed expenditure on arts in 1991-92 relates in real terms to that in 1978-79.

Mr. Renton: The central Government arts programme for 191-92 will be £559 million, a real terms increase on 1978-79 of £214 million, or 62 per cent. I welcome this trend and hope it will continue.

Pocket Theatre, Keswick

31. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister for the Arts when he will visit the Pocket theatre in Keswick in the next month to discuss arts funding.

Mr. Renton: I will not be visiting Keswick in the next month. However, I intend to travel widely in the coming months to visit arts organisations around the country.

Yorkshire and Humberside Arts Board

32. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether it is his intention personally to appoint the chair of the Yorkshire and Humberside arts board.

33. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister for the Arts what proposals he has to fund arts in Merseyside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I am currently considering this matter following lengthy meetings with the chairmen and secretaries—general of the Arts Council, the local authority associations and the regional arts associations. I hope to make a statement before the Christmas recess.

Haymarket Theatre, Leicester

34. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Minister for the Arts whether he proposes to visit the Haymarket theatre in the city of Leicester.

Mr. Renton: I have no firm plans to visit the Haymarket theatre, Leicester, at present. However, I intend to travel widely in the coming months to visit arts organisations around the country.

Ballet

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last paid an official visit to the ballet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: My predecessor attended a triple bill of ballet at the Royal Opera house on 15 November. I attended a performance at the Royal Opera house on 29 October in a private capacity.

Tomorrow evening, I am attending a performance of "Cinderella" by the London City ballet at Sadler's Wells.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if, in the light of worldwide representations concerned with the taxonomic, palaeontological and scientific work of the natural history museum, he will review funding plans for the museum.

Mr. Renton: My predecessor took full account of the natural history museum's corporate plan, and the worldwide representations received in the past six months, when he made his funding announcement on 9 November. The museum has now been asked to prepare a further corporate plan, covering the period to 31 March 1995: this will be the subject of discussion with my officials when it is submitted next spring.

Music Funding

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of national symphony orchestras in Britain to discuss funding for music.

Mr. Renton: I have not yet met representatives of the symphony orchestras, but look forward to doing so in due course.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Retail Prices Index

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when calculating changes in the retail prices index what allowance is made by his Department for community charge rebates.

Mr. Maples: Following recommendations of the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee, subsidies and discounts to selected groups of consumers which are funded by central Government are not taken into account in the index as they are regarded as subventions on income which help certain households to meet the price in question rather than reductions in the price itself. In accordance with this principle no allowance is made for community charge rebates.

Civil Servants

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial help is made available to civil servants whose jobs are transferred from London to other parts of the country; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A range of financial assistance is available to civil servants who are relocated from London to other parts of the country. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that my right hon. Friend the then Paymaster-General gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) on 15 November 1990, col. *188*. All assistance is in the form of reimbursement of reasonable costs that have been necessarily incurred.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Lord: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what steps have been taken to ensure that the criteria applied by Customs and Excise officials in deciding the appropriate value added tax assessment on leaflets are sufficiently clear that traders can comply with value added tax law without the administrative burden of seeking individual rulings from Customs and Excise on each individual case;

(2) what steps are taken to ensure that the criteria used by local value added tax offices in deciding whether value added tax is applicable at the standard rate on leaflets are applied uniformly and do not cause a distortion of trade;

(3) if he will instruct Customs and Excise officials to give a precise definition of paper and card so that traders can have certainty that they are complying with the value added tax law in so far as it applies to leaflets.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Recent VAT tribunal decisions have affected the definition of leaflets for VAT purposes. This has meant that the guidance set out in the Customs notice "Printed and similar matter" needs to be expanded. A new version of the notice will be available early next year. Meanwhile appropriate guidance has been provided to local VAT officers, who will refer cases of difficulty to Customs headquarters for advice.

Drug Budgets

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to exempt hospitals from the requirement to pay value added tax on their drug budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Any value added tax on drugs purchased by National Health Service hospitals which cannot be reclaimed under the normal value added tax rules is provided for in the public expenditure funding of the National Health Service.

Exports

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implications of the decline in exports of goods and services in constant price terms between the second and third quarters of 1990 for the level of the exchange rate within the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Mellor: It has no implication. Imports fell by more than exports and the balance of trade in goods and services at current prices improved by £1·2 billion.

The Government have made it clear beyond question that they have entered into the commitments of the exchange rate mechanism knowingly; it will do whatever is necessary to maintain sterling's position in the exchange rate mechanism.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for, or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Sports Bodies (Taxation)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost of implementing a system of tax exemption for sports bodies responsible for the encouragement, development and governance of their

sport at a national level, where those bodies are representative of sporting or recreational activities deemed to have clear benefits for the health and welfare of participants; if he will make it his policy to implement such a system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* The cost would depend upon the details of the tax exemption the hon. Member has in mind. As regards the possible implementation of such a system, I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Sports Bodies (Taxation)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount paid in corporation tax by representative sports bodies in each of the past 10 years and as a total over the same period.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* I regret that the information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list in descending order the 10 representative sports bodies that paid the highest amounts in corporation tax over the past 10 years.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* No. Information on individual tax payments is confidential to the taxpayer and the Inland Revenue.

Utilities

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will give the contribution to public funds made by the electricity industry for each year between 1979 and 1990;

(2) if he will give the contribution to public funds made by British Gas plc for each year between 1979 and privatisation;

(3) if he will give the contribution to public funds made by British Telecom for each year between 1979 and privatisation.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 13 December 1990]:* The table sets out the external financing requirements (EFRs) of the electricity industry in Great Britain between 1979-80 and 1989-90; of British Gas between 1979-80 and 1986-87; and of British Telecom between 1980-81 and 1985-86. Nationalised industries' contribution to the public expenditure planning total is measured by their EFRs (net cash flows); a negative figure indicates a net repayment of loans or increase in deposits within the public sector.

	Electricity Industries[1]	*British Gas*	*British Telecom*
1979-80	945	−447	[2]—
1980-81	214	−409	−109
1981-82	−153	39	250
1982-83	−29	−230	−323
1983-84	−252	−45	−225
1984-85	850	−189	−341
1985-86	−278	−190	—
1986-87	−1,101	−684	—
1987-88	−1,132	—	—
1988-89	−1,650	—	—
1989-90	−1,536	—	—

[1] Comprises the sum of the EFLs of the electricity industry in England and Wales, the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, and the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

[2] British Telecom was not constituted as a separate body until 1980-81.

ENERGY

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what lessons were learnt from the emergency exercise at Trawsfynydd power station.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The annual demonstration of arrangements for dealing with an emergency affecting the Trawsfynydd power station site was held on 22 November 1990. This was witnessed by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and found to be satisfactory.

Berkeley Power Station

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the Government have decided where they intend to store the irradiated sections of the Berkeley nuclear power station after it has been dismantled and decommissioned.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a management matter for Nuclear Electric, subject to the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive in accordance with the conditions attached to the nuclear site licence.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what progress has so far been made by Nuclear Electric in dismantling and decommissioning the Magnox reactor and its associated systems and buildings at Berkeley in Gloucestershire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc. However, I understand from Nuclear Electric that defuelling of the reactors is progressing well and is expected to be completed in 1992. The company tells me that the extent and timing of dismantling of plant and buildings is currently under review and the results are likely to be announced in the next few months.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications were made for shares in the electricity distribution companies on behalf of children aged *(a)* under five, *(b)* under 16 and *(c)* under 18 years; and what proportion were successful.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is not available.

Nuclear Research

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the mode of operation of the levy on the nuclear industry to enable the Health and Safety Executive to be resourced to undertake nuclear research.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Under the provisions of the Atomic Energy Act 1989, the Health and Safety Executive recovers from nuclear licensees the cost of the safety research for which responsibility was transferred from my Department to the Health and Safety Commission on 1 April this year. This arrangement covers the cost of the research and HSE's costs in managing it.

Opinion Survey

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Wakeham: Central records do not separately identify which of the surveys conducted by the Department included questions seeking opinions and which did not. Such information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sellafield

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the cost to the public purse as a result of land purchases in the area within a 30-mile radius of Sellafield by British Nuclear Fuels; what acreage of land has been purchased since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: British Nuclear Fuels plc's business is financed by borrowing on the commercial markets. Land purchases are a commercial matter for the company.

Sourgas

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what research he has undertaken to establish the safety of sourgas as a power source for gas-fired power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: None. Health and safety at power stations, including appropriate research, is primarily a matter for the employer. The Health and Safety Executive is the public body responsible for ensuring compliance with statutory requirements in this area.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Objectives

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Prime Minister what are the objectives of Her Majesty's Government for the rest of this Parliament.

The Prime Minister: The Government's objectives remain to carry forward the programme outlined in the Queen's Speech, *Official Report*, 7 November 1990, columns 4-6.

Poland

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister if he will hold an early meeting with the president of Poland; and if he will make a statement on British-Poland relations.

The Prime Minister: I certainly hope to meet the Polish President—whose election I warmly welcome—before too long. No date has yet been fixed. Our bilateral relations with Poland are excellent. We hope that President Walesa will maintain the IMF-backed economic reform programme, which is vital to Poland's future prosperity. We will continue to give substantial help to ease the transition to democracy and a market-based economy.

Terrorism

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Prime Minister how many people have been killed and how many injured *(a)* in Great Britain and *(b)* in Northern Ireland as a result of terrorist activity each month since May 1988.

The Prime Minister: The information is given in the tables.

(a) Great Britain

	Deaths	*Injuries*
1988		
May	0	0
June	0	0
July	0	0
August	1	8
September	0	0
October	0	0
November	0	0
December	270	[1]5
1989		
January	0	0
February	0	1
March	0	0
April	0	0
May	0	0
June	0	0
July	0	0
August	0	0
September	11	16
October	0	0
November	0	2
December	0	0
1990		
January	0	0
February	0	2
March	0	0
April	0	0
May	1	9
June	1	41
July	1	0
August	0	0
September	0	4
October	0	0
November	0	0
December	0	0

[1] The figures for December 1988 result from the Lockerbie incident. All other figures result from terrorist activity connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland.

(b) Northern Ireland

	Deaths	*Injuries*
1988		
May	5	90
June	9	64
July	11	67
August	26	159
September	4	117
October	8	67
November	4	67
December	2	56
1989		
January	3	49
February	10	64
March	12	61
April	4	102
May	3	103
June	4	91
July	5	99
August	2	109
September	3	56
October	5	76
November	9	60

	Deaths	*Injuries*
December	2	89
1990		
January	8	70
February	0	122
March	6	66
April	9	54
May	1	84
June	5	59
July	8	111
August	1	71
September	6	77
October	19	[1]—
November	9	[1]—

[1] These figures are not yet available.

Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will review the percentage increase in the expenditure on advertising in the press, television and other forms of publicity in each Department of state in the last five years and institute an inquiry into the reasons for any departmental increases which are in excess of the rate of inflation over the period.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure on advertising in the press, television and other forms of publicity is a matter for departmental Ministers within the Government conventions on the use of paid publicity and advertising.

Downing Street

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister if he has any plans to re-establish the public right of way through Downing street.

The Prime Minister: Access to Downing street has been controlled for security reasons for many years. This does not stop the many people who come to Downing street for meetings, receptions or to present petitions.

Bangladesh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister what message he has sent to the newly appointed President of Bangladesh; if he will place the text of any messages in the Library; and if he will make a statement about relations between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister: My right hon Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary sent a message of good wishes to the acting President, Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and looks forward to working with the new interim Government of Bangladesh to reinforce the friendly relations which already exist between our two countries.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of the Cabinet Office and Management and Personnel Office since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

WALES

Corlan Housing Association

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) when he expects to receive a copy of the investigation by Tai Cymru into the financial collapse of the Corlan housing association; and if he will place a copy of the report in the Library;

(2) when he expects to meet the chairman of Tai Cymru to discuss his report on the financial collapse of the Corlan housing association.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Housing Association Consultancy and Advisory Service's report has been received in the Department and is being studied. It is not customary to publish reports of inquiries carried out under section 28 of the Housing Associations Act 1985, but I will make a further statement when the legal and other implications of the report have been considered.

Pontypridd-Treforest Rhondda Ring Road

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the Pontypridd-Treforest Rhondda ring road scheme is to begin and proceed along the agreed construction time tables announced earlier this year.

Mr. David Hunt: It was not possible to accommodate in full Mid Glamorgan county council's 1991-92 bid for transport grant support for the Pontypridd inner relief road scheme. The transport grant settlement announced on 5 December will enable the county council to continue with substantial expenditure on advance works. The timing of the scheme is for the county council to consider in the light of the settlement.

Homelessness

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards single homeless people in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Local housing authorities are responsible for assessing housing needs within their own areas including those of single people. Working in partnership with housing associations and the private sector, it is for them to secure appropriate accommodation for single homeless people in the Principality, making sensitive use of the substantial resources we are making available to assist in tackling homelessness generally. I am considering what further action might be taken to help assist the single homeless.

Single People's Accommodation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new units of accommodation for single people were constructed in Wales in each of the years 1979 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is not collected centrally. However, figures for one-bedroomed houses and flats from 1979 to date, may be found in table 6.8 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-1989" a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Speed Limits

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy on the introduction of new village speed limits on trunk roads in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Requests for new village speed limits are judged against the criteria and guidance set out in Welsh Office circular 10/80. Consideration is also given to whether engineering or traffic signing measures would be appropriate instead of or in addition to a speed limit.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the new 30 and 40 mph speed limits respectively introduced and removed on trunk roads in Wales in each of the years from 1985 to date.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is given in the table:

Year	*Introduced*		*Removed*	
	30 mph	*40 mph*	*30 mph*	*40 mph*
1985	A40 Crickhowell, Powys	A470/A4060 Abercynon-Pentrebach	A470/A4060 Abercynon-Pentrebach A4232 Capel Llanilltern-Culverhouse Cross, South Glamorgan A494 Llanferres, Clwyd A55/A494 Ewloe Interchange, Clwyd	—
1986	A40 Whitland, Dyfed	—	A55 Bodelwyddan, Clwyd A55 Holywell, Clwyd	A55 Bodelwyddan, Clwyd
1987	—	—	A470 Dolfach, Powys A477 Llanteg, Dyfed	—
1988	—	A5 Pentrefoelas, Clwyd A487 Dinas, Dyfed	A487 Cross Hands, Dyfed A40 Whitland, Dyfed A48 Cheps:tow, Gwen A48 Chepstow, Gwent A55 Holywell, Clwyd A483 Ruabon, Clwyd A458 Middletown, Powys	—
1989	—	A40 Prendergast, Dyfed	A55 Penmaenmawr, Gwynedd A55 Llanfairfechan, Gwynedd A55 Holywell-Northop, Clwyd	—
1990	A477 Kingswood, Pembroke Dock	A470 Rhayader, Powys	A55 Travellers Inn, Clwyd A487 Cardigan By Pass	—

Treatment Centres

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list against each of the centres established in Wales as part of the treatment centres initiative *(a)* its name, location and specialty, *(b)* its commencement date, *(c)* the budget allocated to that centre for 1989-90 and 1990-91 and *(d)* the number of patients treated at that centre since it started work.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

1. Orthopaedic treatment centre, Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar, South Glamorgan:
   (a) Opened December 1989
   (b) Funding: £223,500 in 1989-90
   £598,000 in 1990-91
   (c) Number of patients treated: 285 at end November 1990.
2. General surgical; treatment centre (various veins and hernias) Bridgend General hospital, Mid Glamorgan:
   (a) Opened March 1990
   (b) Funding: £197,000 in 1989-90
   £342,000 in 1990-91
   (c) Number of patients treated: 394 at end November 1990.
3. Ophthalmic treatment centre, Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor, Gwynedd:
   (a) Opened June 1990
   (b) Funding: £88,000 in 1989-90
   £263,000 in 1990-91
   (c) Number of patients treated: 172 at end November 1990.

Private Landlords

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will take steps to strengthen the ability of local authorities in Wales to bring the standard of the worst landlords in the private sector up to that of the best;

(2) what fresh initiatives he intends to take to protect the most vulnerable tenants in the private rented sector from harassment.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 14 December 1990.

Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those headings of Welsh Office expenditure, including grant in aid or funding of agencies, which include, or may include, some element of expenditure on advertising in the press, on television or radio or other expenditure on advertising and promotion in addition to the figures given in his answer of 11 December, *Official Report*, columns *332-33*.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures provided in my anser of 11 December to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) cover all identifiable items of publicity and related expenditure incurred directly by the Welsh Office in each of the years shown.

Information about publicity and related expenditure of the many bodies which receive funding from the Department is not collected centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Pensioner Households

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each standard region, the number of pensioner-only households, specifying those with only one pensioner occupant and those with two or more.

Mr. Key: Estimates of the numbers of pensioner-only households for each standard region are given in the table. These estimates are based on family expenditure survey data from 1987, 1988 and 1989 and "pensioners" is taken to be persons of pensionable age.

Thousands

Region	*One pensioner households*	*Two or more pensioner households*
Northern	235	115
Yorkshire and Humberside	380	215
North-West	410	240
East Midlands	250	185
West Midlands	350	215
East Anglia	145	135
Greater London	410	190
Rest of South-East	650	485
South-West	300	240

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the proceeds for each standard region of a levy of 1 per cent. in the estimated value of dwellings together with the number of *(a)* children under the age of 18 years, *(b)* disabled persons, *(c)* retirement pensioners and *(d)* other adults.

Mr. Key: The available information is given in the table. The estimated value of dwellings in each region is based on recent data on house sales prices and numbers of domestic hereditaments in each region. This is the best information available but is of limited accuracy. Population data is taken from the Office of Population Census and Surveys 1989 mid year estimates.

Region	*Yield from 1 per cent. £ billion*	*Children under 18 (thousands)*	*Persons of pension age (thousands)*	*Adults (all 18+) (thousands)*
Northern	0·7	697	566	2,376
Yorkshire and Humberside	1·0	1,136	906	3,805
North-West	1·3	1,491	1,154	4,889
East Midlands	0·9	915	712	3,084
West Midlands	1·2	1,216	912	4,000
East Anglia	0·5	468	397	1,577
Greater London	2·6	1,516	1,172	5,246
Rest of South-East	3·4	2,408	1,974	8,219
South-West	1·2	1,009	982	3,643

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to establish constitutionally independent local authorities in the United Kingdom which would be able to raise their own revenue, go bankrupt, and be free from central Government capital controls.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has announced that we are initiating a thorough review of local government finance and structure. No options have been ruled in or out at this stage.

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what dates revenue support grant and non-domestic rates will be paid to local authorities in 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: Details of the profile of revenue support grant payments for England for the next financial year have been sent by my Department to local authorities. A copy of the Department's letter has been placed in the Library. The profile, which was determined after consultation with the local authority associations, should ensure that authorities who are diligent in collecting the community charge and non-domestic rates will be able to maintain an adequate cash flow.

Household Sizes

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each standard region the number of households with one, two, three and four or more adults.

Mr. Key: Estimates of the numbers of households with one, two and three or more adults for each standard region are given in the table. These estimates are based on family expenditure survey data from 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Thousands

Region	*One adult households*	*Two adult households*	*Three or more adult household*
Northern	455	745	200
Yorks and Humberside	745	1,175	270
North-West	920	1,420	375
East Midlands	530	945	225
West Midlands	690	1,220	345
East Anglia	285	545	115
Greater London	1,075	1,285	305
Rest of South-East	1,310	2,580	560
South-West	585	1,145	255

Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to implement the recommendation of the National Radiological Protection Board to reduce the maximum exposure to radiation for members of the public to 0·5 mSv per annum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The recommendations made by the National Radiological Protection Board are firstly that the dose limit for members of the public should be 1 mSv in a year and, secondly, since individuals may be exposed to more than one radiation source, that the maximum dose from any single source should not be more than 0·5 mSv in a year. Since 1984, authorisations for the disposal of radioactive waste under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 have been based on these recommendations.

Community Charge

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to exempt from the community charge the British wives of United States service personnel resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Key: The Government have not sought such an exemption because we concluded that these United Kingdom citizens need not be treated differently from other United Kingdom citizens.

Rechar (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning additionality in relation to the Rechar programme application by the Easington district council.

Mr. Yeo: In setting annually the level of public expenditure programmes for local authorities, including Easington, account is taken of anticipated European Community receipts including initiatives such as Rechar. Consequently, these programmes are larger than they would otherwise be. In addition, for 1990-91 the other services block was "top sliced" by £25 million for distribution as supplementary credit approvals to local authorities in receipt of European regional development funds. In the light of representations from local authorities it is proposed to increase the top slice to £45 million for this purpose in 1991-92.

Disabled People

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the impact on disabled people of the use of domestic rate relief.

Mr. Key: Under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 local authorities were required, on application from the occupier of a dwelling, to grant rate rebates in respect of facilities provided for the disabled. With the abolition of domestic rates, these provisions of the Act have been repealed.

Ecological Experts (Norway)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who represented his Department at the lecture by Professor I. S. Gray of the university of Oslo on ecological advice and the law in Norway; what report has been made in relation to the system whereby Government White Papers in Norway are sent to ecological experts before presentation to the Norwegian Storting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The chief scientist of my Department was present at this meeting of the British Ecological Society, at which Professor Gray's presentation, among others, was made. I understand that a report of the meeting is being prepared by the British Ecological Society.

Anchor Complex Inquiry

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the report of the inspector appointed to consider the Anchor complex inquiry, Penryn, Cornwall; if he has consulted English Heritage on the contents of that report; when he intends announcing his decision; and if will make it his policy to deal with the matter with the utmost urgency.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend received the inspector's report on the inquiry into the proposed development at the Anchor warehouse complex, Penryn on 28 August 1990. He has not consulted English Heritage on the contents of the inspector's report because he has no locus to do so. His decision will be issued as soon as possible.

Used Tyres

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number and location of sites in England that have been used for the underground burial of used tyres; how regularly these sites are inspected to check on their safety and any general environmental implications that they may have; if he will make this information available to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Information on the number and location of sites used for the underground burial of used tyres is not held centrally. Her Majesty's chief inspector of fire services wrote to the Chief and Assistant Fire Officers Association in May about the problem posed by tyre dumps. Responses from chief fire officers gave some indication of the number of tyre dumps in particular areas. My Department will be writing to local authorities in the new year to seek further information on the location of tyre dumps.

The disposal of waste by landfill is licensed by waste disposal authorities under the Control of Pollution Act 1974. Individual site licences may set down conditions relating to the disposal of used tyres. Used tyres which cannot be remoulded or retreaded are commonly shreded prior to disposal by landfill where they are mixed with other waste.

The monitoring of licensed waste disposal sites is carried out by waste disposal authorities. These authorities have a duty to maintain a register of all disposal licences issued by them which are in force and to make this register available to the public.

Rental Deposits

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultation he has had concerning the National Consumer Council report on rental deposits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) when he was Minister for Housing and Planning, met the chairman of the National Consumer Council to discuss the report, and discussions have also taken place at official level. We have agreed to explore with the National Consumer Council and other bodies the possibility of a voluntary rental deposit scheme.

Sellafield

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what the geological investigations of the land forms in the environs of British Nuclear Fuel's plant at Sellafield have indicated with respect to their suitability for deep dry storage of irradiated waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Site investigations for UK Nirex Ltd's deep repository for low and intermediate-level radioactive waste are currently under way at Sellafield. It is too early to say whether the site is suitable for the construction of a repository. Phase 1 of the site investigations is expected to be completed by the end of 1991.

Pesticides

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy for owners of land to be made legally responsible for offences committed by people in their employment in respect of offences relating to endangering wildlife and keeping pesticides illegally under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no plans at present to introduce legislation to amend the relevant provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The keeping of pesticides is governed by regulations made under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 for which my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible. It is an offence for any person, without reasonable excuse, to cause or permit another to contravene those regulations.

West Yorkshire Fire and Civil Defence Authority

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the West Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority on his proposed financial settlement for 1991-92; if he will publish details of those representations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have received a number of representations from the West Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority on our proposals for the revenue support grant settlement for 1991-92, including those put to me when I met a delegation from the authority on 28 November. It is for the authority to make public its representations if it so chooses.

We are proposing to increase the authority's standard spending assessment by £6·2 million to £44·1 million, which we believe to be an appropriate assessment of the costs of providing the fire service in West Yorkshire. We shall carefully consider all the representations received before taking our decisions on the settlement.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give details of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1991-92.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten), the then Secretary of State, announced on 8 November the allocation of additional resources to the Housing Corporation to enable housing associations to provide more subsidised housing, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of the homeless. Gross expenditure by the Housing Corporation is expected to exceed £2 billion in 1993-94, a 65 per cent. increase over the current year, with a target of 40,000 completions in that year.

This is a clear indication both of the Government's commitment to the housing association movement as the main providers of new subsidised homes, and of our determination to tackle the problem of homelessness.

I have today approved the Housing Corporation's proposals for the overall shape of its approved development programme for 1991-92. A further announcement will be made early in the new year about the regional allocation of resources, once I have received the corporation's detailed proposals.

The broad outline of the corporation's proposals confirms the priority that is being accorded to the problem of homelessness by the Government and their agencies. About half the total number of new homes for rent will be targeted on the homeless. The corporation's rural programme will also be maintained and increased in future years.

It is important that the large investment which the Government are making in the housing association movement should be employed efficiently. The programme shows a further increase in the proportion of schemes for rent funded jointly with the private sector, providing greater leverage of resources for the public sector input. The corporation is also committed to achieving efficiency gains of at least 5 per cent. over three years through, among other things, greater attention to cost competition in the selection of bids.

The introduction of the new grant regime under the Housing Act 1988 has been a major task. The corporation's early problems in programming its expenditure are now being resolved, and I am confident that it is able to respond positively to the enhanced role it now has in implementing the Government's housing policy.

The breakdown of the approved development programme—ADP—for 1991-92 and provisional plans for the following two years is as follows:

£ million

	1991-92 ADP	*1992-93 Plans*	*1993-94 Plans*
Housing for rent[1]	1,385	1,512	1,714
Major repairs and other works	53	71	84
Mini-HAG	7	8	9
Tenants incentive scheme	32	34	36
Low cost home ownership[2]	105	110	159
Other expenditure[3]	6	3	3
Total gross expenditure	1,588	1,738	2,005
Receipts	−93	−97	−103
Total net expenditure	1,495	1,641	1,902

Notes:
[1]Includes public expenditure on mixed funded for rent schemes and 100 per cent. publicity funded rented schemes.
[2]Includes shared ownership and rehabilitation for sale.
[3]Includes right to buy mortgages and self build.

Programme targets for 1991-92 are as follows:

	Approvals (units)
General needs—rent	26,500
Special needs—rent	3,000
Rural housing (rent and sale)	1,500
Low-cost home ownership (non rural)	
New build	2,700
Rehabilitation (including outright sale)	1,000
Tenants incentive scheme	2,500
Mini-HAG	1,800
Total	39,000

Amenity Trees

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures the Government intend to take in order to ensure the continued safeguarding of amenity trees.

Mr. Baldry: Jointly with the Welsh Office, my Department has today issued a consultation paper setting out our proposals to enhance the effectiveness of the tree preservation order system and to clarify and streamline the relevant statutory provisions and procedures. The paper also gives details of the Government's proposal to give powers to local planning authorities to make hedgerow management orders to safeguard key hedgerows, with payment to farmers or others for upkeep. I have arranged for copies of the paper to be placed in the Library of the House.

School Facilities

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to bring forward amendments to the Local Government and Housing Act 1990 so that capital investment in schools' facilities by a commercial concern or major voluntary club as part of a dual-use agreement is not treated as a capital receipt to the local education authority.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* No. There is no reason why this type of investment should necessarily result in a capital receipt for the local education authority.

Science Parks

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the available EC resources for science park development has been taken up by local authorities in Britain.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* Local authorities have utilised EC resources in support of science park development, but precise information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Peterlee Tertiary College

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to make available funds for the repair, renewal and maintenance of the Peterlee tertiary college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The Department received bids from the Durham education authority which included a bid for the repair, renewal and maintenance of Peterlee tertiary college. Durham's bids have been considered alongside those received from other education authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend today announced the following allocations for Durham education authority:

	£
Minor works	273,000
Equipment	128,000

Teachers

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average number of *(a)* holidays and *(b)* sickness days taken by teachers in each of the years 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1989.

Mr. Fallon: I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers were employed in local education in *(a)* 1970 and *(b)* the latest available year; what was the number of school pupils in these years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested for local education authority maintained and grant-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England is given below:

January	*Teachers (FTE thousands)*	*Pupils (FTE thousands)*
1970	328·7	7,514·9
1990	398·5	6,753·2

Schools (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will visit the schools in the Easington constituency.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so at present.

Teachers (Language Training)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much money has been spent in the last five years on the training of teachers in ethnic minority languages; and what are the languages currently being studied by those teachers.

Mr. Fallon: This information is not collected centrally.

Student Expenditure

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures to show expenditure per student across the whole range of taught subject areas at polytechnics *(a)* in England and *(b)* in Wales in 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: For the financial year 1988-89, the latest year for which data are available, net recurrent expenditure per full-time equivalent student in English polytechnics is estimated at £3,565. Non-university higher education in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures to show expenditure per student across the whole range of taught subject areas at universities *(a)* in England, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* in Wales in 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I refer the hon. Member to the 1990 volume of "University Management Statistics and Performance Indicators", produced by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Universities Funding Council, a copy of which is in the Library. This draws on 1988-89 data: detailed figures for university expenditure in 1989-90 are not yet available.

University Colleges, Wales

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures listing the numbers of staff teaching full-time in the following departments at university colleges in Wales in 1980 and 1990: *(a)* chemistry, *(b)* physics, *(c)* biology, *(d)* management studies, *(e)* engineering and *(f)* mathematics.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The latest information is as follows:

Full-time academic staff in specified cost centres at university colleges in Wales

	1980	*1988*
Physical sciences	274	251
Biological sciences	264	355
Businesss and management studies	24	71
Mathematical sciences	164	173
Engineering and technology	329	308

Source: Universities Statistical Record
Universities statistics 1980 Volume three Table 11
Universities statistics 1988-89 Volume Three Table 9

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the departments which have been removed from university colleges in Wales over the past 10 years, by college.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for individual university institutions, within the total resources at their disposal, to determine their academic provision and its organisation. Information on local changes in these matters is not collected centrally.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide figures listing the numbers of students studying in the following departments at university colleges in Wales in 1980 and 1990 *(a)* chemistry, *(b)* physics, *(c)* biology, *(d)* management studies, *(e)* engineering and *(f)* mathematics.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The latest available information is as follows:

Students studying courses in specified subject groups

	Chemistry	*Physics*	*Biology*	*Management studies*	*Engineering*	*Mathematics*
Undergraduates Full-time and Sandwich						
1980	317	195	443	263	2,219	475
1988	397	205	422	620	1,631	321
Undergraduates Part-time						
1980	0	0	0	0	0	0
1988	1	0	0	1	2	0
Post-graduates Full-time and Sandwich						
1980	157	57	130	72	249	99
1988	154	160	144	248	500	84
Post-graduates Part-time						
1980	15	11	6	11	47	14
1988	39	38	18	115	207	21

Source: Universities Statistical Record.
Note: A new subject classification was used for university statistics from and for 1985-86. Data prior to 1985-86 are not comparable with those for subsequent years.

Teacher Training

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out for 1979-80, 1983-84 and the latest available figures the number and standard of A-level passes for students entering initial teacher training.

Mr. Fallon: Information is given in the table:

United Kingdom domiciled first year undergraduate students with A level entry qualifications: Initial Teacher Training in England

Academic Year	*Total number*[2]	*Average A-level points score*[3]
1979-80		
UDE[1]	300	6·3
Polytechnic/College	6,390	5·3
Total	6,690	5·3
1983-84		
UDE	407	7·8
Polytechnic/College	5,580	5·5

Academic Year	Total number[2]	Average A-level points score[3]
Total	5,987	5·7
1988-89		
UDE	734	7·3
Polytechnic/College	5,600	5·2
Total	6,334	5·4

[1] UDE—University of Education.
[2] Covers students studying BEd., Cert. Ed. and other undergraduate ITT.
[3] Refers to the average A level points score of those who were recorded on USR and FESR as having A level entry qualifications.
Notes: A level points score has been calculated in the customary way, by allocating 5 points for an A grade, 4 points for a B grade etc.
Sources:
University Statistical Record for University Departments of Education.
Further Education Statistical Record for Polytechnics and Colleges.

Schools, Northumberland

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has been notified under Education Act procedures of the decision of Northumberland education committee to move Netherton county first school into Thropton county first school; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: I understand that pupils attending Netherton county first school have been temporarily relocated at nearby Thropton county first school, following concern by Northumberland county council about the structural condition of Netherton school. The council acted in the interests of the safety of the children concerned.

There are no statutory procedures which require the county council to inform my right hon. and learned Friend of its actions in these circumstances. Nonetheless, the Department has been kept informed of developments.

Special Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of pupils belonging to other local education authorities attending special schools maintained by each local education authority in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is set out in the table.

The number of pupils belonging to other local education authorities attending special schools maintained by each local education authority as recorded on returns made to the Department of Education

	January 1989	January 1990
City of London	0	0
Camden	331	223
Greenwich	188	170
Hackney	189	198
Hammersmith	285	271
Islington	110	101
Kensington	89	94
Lambeth	372	352
Lewisham	117	115
Southwark	212	175
Tower Hamlets	63	61
Wandsworth	361	360
Westminster	110	100
Barking	6	10
Barnet	69	59
Bexley	10	14
Brent	44	35
Bromley	46	50
Croydon	25	27
Ealing	26	15
Enfield	45	46
Haringey	61	48
Harrow	15	13
Havering	9	8
Hillingdon	8	3
Hounslow	27	36
Kingston	51	31
Merton	9	8
Newham	22	18
Redbridge	31	28
Richmond	16	18
Sutton	42	33
Waltham Forest	277	363
Birmingham	184	162
Coventry	45	42
Dudley	7	8
Sandwell	20	20
Solihull	12	6
Walsall	32	25
Wolverhampton	37	34
Knowsley	40	41
Liverpool	97	66
St. Helens	37	14
Sefton	34	31
Wirral	9	7
Bolton	35	34
Bury	14	22
Manchester	199	176
Oldham	99	105
Rochdale	14	19
Salford	111	97
Stockport	6	6
Tameside	17	11
Trafford	11	14
Wigan	52	59
Barnsley	22	2
Doncaster	6	5
Rotherham	8	9
Sheffield	101	76
Bradford	60	70
Calderdale	3	3
Kirklees	14	39
Leeds	64	51
Wakefield	14	13
Gateshead	38	25
Newcastle	66	91
North Tyne	8	10
South Tyne	2	3
Sunderland	29	33
Avon	47	39
Bedfordshire	4	1
Berkshire	66	70
Bucks	31	31
Cambridge	27	51
Cheshire	44	41
Cleveland	45	35
Cornwall	7	2
Cumbria	4	0
Derbyshire	32	34
Devon	30	29
Dorset	69	50
Durham	29	29
East Sussex	45	43
Essex	52	37
Gloucester	23	10

	January 1989	January 1990
Hampshire	47	81
Hereford	56	60
Hertfordshire	139	142
Humberside	31	19
Isle of Wight	4	2
Kent	75	45
Lancashire	43	41
Leicester	6	5
Lincolnshire	38	37
Norfolk	25	25
North Yorks	42	38
Northants	13	6
Northumberland	33	28
Notts	46	30
Oxfordshire	45	45
Shropshire	11	8
Somerset	18	5
Staffordshire	34	19
Suffolk	32	28
Surrey	145	144
Warwickshire	166	152
West Sussex	45	43
Wiltshire	11	3

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of pupils in each local education authority in England with statements of special educational need in *(a)* maintained primary schools, *(b)* maintained middle schools, *(c)* maintained secondary schools and *(d)* maintained special schools, in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data for 1990 are not yet available. Information for 1989 is given in the following table.

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs
January 1989

	Pupils with statements in			
	Primary schools	*Middle schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Special schools*[1]
Barking	48	0	29	195
Barnet	106	0	53	366
Bexley	160	0	125	279
Brent	46	0	46	366
Bromley	307	0	124	413
Croydon	202	0	153	507
Ealing	53	55	30	496
Enfield	31	0	13	436
Haringey	23	0	18	335
Harrow	73	33	56	258
Havering	126	0	63	299
Hillingdon	51	0	33	369
Hounslow	185	0	108	487
Kingston upon Thames	36	0	40	258
Merton	45	29	10	257
Newham	111	0	67	494
Redbridge	36	0	23	400
Richmond upon Thames	68	0	37	179
Sutton	69	0	27	309
Waltham Forest	53	0	81	730
Inner London	1,389	0	747	6,432
Birmingham	344	15	382	2,929
Coventry	85	0	86	907
Dudley	161	2	74	557
Sandwell	44	0	51	899
Solihull	127	0	89	264
Walsall	102	0	56	594
Wolverhampton	173	0	94	494
Knowsley	41	0	59	638
Liverpool	97	0	36	1,709
St. Helens	56	0	48	469
Sefton	146	0	87	466
Wirral	259	0	147	830
Bolton	63	0	61	464
Bury	203	0	127	275
Manchester	41	0	77	1,813
Oldham	133	0	81	599
Rochdale	92	18	78	536
Salford	44	0	20	747
Stockport	292	0	168	368
Tameside	213	0	34	415
Trafford	146	0	111	415
Wigan	111	0	44	740
Barnsley	108	4	42	227
Doncaster	64	31	28	731
Rotherham	139	0	41	603
Sheffield	206	82	233	909

	Pupils with statements in			
	Primary schools	*Middle schools*	*Secondary schools*	*Special schools*[1]
Bradford	81	69	88	1,040
Calderdale	86	0	44	262
Kirklees	331	37	166	649
Leeds	528	338	399	1,260
Wakefield	85	22	31	667
Gateshead	41	0	40	443
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	149	25	145	619
North Tyneside	85	29	66	415
South Tyneside	83	0	59	319
Sunderland	131	0	71	633
Isle of Scilly	0	0	0	0
Avon	937	0	1,049	2,122
Bedfordshire	186	87	97	1,148
Berkshire	338	29	110	1,486
Buckinghamshire	291	266	397	1,545
Cambridgeshire	442	2	319	1,063
Cheshire	1,083	0	948	1,478
Cleveland	270	0	412	1,652
Cornwall	706	0	525	321
Cumbria	485	0	456	469
Derbyshire	878	0	1,037	1,492
Devon	808	72	793	1,705
Dorset	164	123	268	1,174
Durham	279	0	165	1,035
East Sussex	50	0	45	1,377
Essex	809	0	785	2,620
Gloucestershire	83	0	85	1,226
Hampshire	488	152	552	3,850
Hereford and Worcester	98	8	35	1,314
Hertfordshire	760	46	508	1,985
Humberside	383	18	305	1,356
Isle of Wight	36	26	27	286
Kent	665	16	345	3,391
Lancashire	657	0	554	3,247
Leicestershire	485	52	268	1,193
Lincolnshire	337	0	379	1,191
Norforlk	407	263	475	890
North Yorkshire	495	0	272	1,084
Northamptonshire	243	52	169	1,215
Northumberland	134	98	46	558
Nottinghamshire	50	2	55	2,342
Oxfordshire	42	0	61	837
Shropshire	335	16	505	660
Somerset	467	98	450	602
Staffordshire	381	23	186	1,982
Suffolk	584	295	443	766
Surrey	527	319	272	1,862
Warwickshire	126	39	75	1,434
West Sussex	122	48	111	1,187
Wiltshire	671	64	721	745
England	24,608	3,003	19,651	95,660

[1] All pupils in special schools are assumed to have statements.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of pupils belonging to each London education authority attending special schools maintained by other local education authorities in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information requested is set out in the table.

The number of pupils belonging to London education authorities attending special schools maintained by other local education authorities as recorded on returns made to the Department of Education

	January 1989	*January 1990*
City of London	6	5
Camden	125	123
Greenwich	119	115
Hackney	222	213
Hammersmith	103	100
Islington	167	149
Kensington	208	196
Lambeth	273	240

	January 1989	*January 1990*
Lewisham	195	194
Southwark	237	236
Tower Hamlets	114	111
Wandsworth	206	181
Westminster	161	151
Barking	32	31
Barnet	77	89
Bexley	81	75
Brent	76	74
Bromley	34	25
Croydon	56	55
Ealing	71	74
Enfield	117	101
Haringey	92	91
Harrow	52	46
Havering	47	47
Hillingdon	43	42
Hounslow	25	26
Kingston	18	17
Merton	78	64
Newham	59	61
Redbridge	61	74
Richmond	36	35
Sutton	52	49
Waltham Forest	23	19

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities who have *(a)* developed most or all of their special needs budget to schools in the local management of schools policy and *(b)* retained most of their special needs budget centrally.

Mr. Fallon: Of the 87 local education authorities operating statutory schemes for the local management of schools in the current financial year the following 10 have delegated to school level some or all resources for pupils with statements of special educational needs attending ordinary schools and special units:

Bexley
Buckinghamshire
Bury
Derbyshire
Hampshire
Hounslow
Leeds
Redbridge
Sefton
Staffordshire

The other 77 local education authorities have retained resources for such pupils centrally as an excepted item.

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what was the number of pupils with statements of special educational need in non-maintained special schools and independent schools under the arrangements of each local education authority in January 1989 and 1990;

(2) how many pupils belonging to each local education authority attended non-maintained special schools and independent schools for the purposes of special educational treatment in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Data for 1990 are not yet available. The information requested for 1989 is given in the following tables.

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs in independent schools and non-maintained special schools January 1989

Local education authority	*Non-maintained special*[1]	*Independent schools*
Barking	0	0
Barnet	0	5
Bexley	0	0
Brent	0	0
Bromley	40	2
Croydon	0	10
Ealing	0	40
Enfield	0	1
Haringey	0	1
Harrow	0	9
Havering	0	0
Hillingdon	98	0
Hounslow	0	0
Kingston upon Thames	0	0
Merton	0	0
Newham	0	0
Redbridge	21	78
Richmond upon Thames	0	0
Sutton	0	68
Waltham Forest	0	1
Inner London	0	28
Birmingham	64	12
Coventry	0	0
Dudley	0	2
Sandwell	0	0
Solihull	0	1
Walsall	0	0
Wolverhampton	0	0
Knowsley	0	0
Liverpool	153	0
St. Helens	0	20
Sefton	183	95
Wirral	118	1
Bolton	40	0
Bury	0	0
Manchester	0	0
Oldham	0	0
Rochdale	0	0
Salford	0	0
Stockport	345	16
Tameside	0	0
Trafford	0	0
Wigan	0	0
Barnsley	0	0
Doncaster	337	125
Rotherham	0	31
Sheffield	0	0
Bradford	0	1
Calderdale	91	27
Kirklees	39	0
Leeds	208	21
Wakefield	0	0
Gateshead	0	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	141	6
North Tyneside	133	0
South Tyneside	0	0
Sunderland	0	52
Isles of Scilly	0	0
Avon	0	204
Bedfordshire	0	2
Berkshire	231	48
Buckinghamshire	0	50
Cambridgeshire	0	101
Cheshire	178	3

Local education authority	Non-maintained special[1]	Independent schools
Cleveland	0	2
Cornwall	0	37
Cumbria	0	324
Derbyshire	147	255
Devon	340	500
Dorset	92	163
Durham	0	1
East Sussex	440	465
Essex	187	95
Gloucestershire	83	138
Hampshire	283	401
Hereford and Worcester	166	228
Hertfordshire	62	87
Humberside	0	0
Isle of Wight	48	0
Kent	483	181
Lancashire	221	16
Leicestershire	0	60
Lincolnshire	0	60
Norfolk	0	196
North Yorkshire	183	46
Northamptonshire	36	63
Northumberland	0	45
Nottinghamshire	80	57
Oxfordshire	154	45
Shropshire	91	229
Somerset	64	239
Staffordshire	0	140
Suffolk	0	119
Surrey	656	68
Warwickshire	0	0
West Sussex	102	258
Wiltshire	66	18
ENGLAND	6,404	5,597

[1] All pupils in special schools are assumed to have statements.

Pupil Numbers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of full-time pupils in *(a)* maintained primary schools, *(b)* maintained middle schools, *(c)* maintained secondary schools and *(d)* maintained special schools in each local education area in England in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Fallon: Data for 1990 are not yet available. Information for 1989 is given in the following table.

Number of full-time pupils in maintained schools by local education authority
January 1989

	Primary schools	Middle schools	Secondary schools	Special schools
Barking	12,988	0	8,805	186
Barnet	20,473	0	17,575	366
Bexley	16,298	0	14,400	276
Brent	19,464	0	10,891	364
Bromley	18,888	0	15,506	412
Croydon	23,868	0	16,349	503
Ealing	23,792	6,791	11,067	491
Enfield	20,035	0	15,940	436
Haringey	15,037	0	8,358	334
Harrow	17,135	5,121	7,797	255
Havering	18,039	0	16,268	292
Hillingdon	16,161	0	13,000	365
Hounslow	16,258	0	12,102	487
Kingston upon Thames	8,456	0	7,193	257
Merton	7,755	5,425	11,111	251
Newham	18,514	0	13,062	484
Redbridge	16,137	0	13,150	390
Richmond upon Thames	8,464	0	6,756	178
Sutton	10,648	0	10,471	297
Waltham Forest	16,174	0	11,602	707
Inner London Boroughs				
City	547	0	0	0
Camden	9,185	0	9,788	555
Greenwich	17,587	0	13,483	742
Hackney	13,947	0	7,544	665
Hammersmith	7,932	0	6,433	493
Islington	12,809	0	6,914	347
Kensington & Chelsea	5,793	0	3,679	95
Lambeth	16,493	0	6,228	952
Lewisham	16,865	0	11,248	474
Southwark	18,128	0	9,297	592
Tower Hamlets	15,321	0	10,554	443
Wandsworth	14,738	0	10,341	819
Westminster	7,897	0	6,865	224
Total Inner London	157,242	0	102,374	6,401
Birmingham	96,385	3,243	64,728	2,916
Coventry	25,997	0	18,865	904
Dudley	26,031	750	16,880	556
Sandwell	25,816	0	19,216	889
Solihull	16,896	0	14,432	263

	Primary schools	Middle schools	Secondary schools	Special schools
Walsall	23,283	0	19,189	580
Wolverhampton	20,965	0	16,097	
Knowsley	15,237	0	9,709	630
Liverpool	42,491	0	29,599	1,675
St. Helens	15,716	0	13,176	464
Sefton	24,034	0	19,043	461
Wirral	28,046	0	21,316	779
Bolton	23,675	0	17,810	463
Bury	14,612	0	10,366	275
Manchester	40,138	0	24,921	1,795
Oldham	21,428	0	15,171	599
Rochdale	18,395	3,511	14,973	531
Salford	20,401	0	13,763	743
Stockport	23,256	0	18,063	362
Tameside	19,163	0	14,286	405
Trafford	15,941	0	11,278	395
Wigan	26,938	0	21,948	739
Barnsley	17,519	731	14,501	223
Doncaster	24,338	9,233	20,924	725
Rotherham	21,582	0	18,221	587
Sheffield	38,782	7,848	26,476	891
Bradford	33,640	22,310	42,873	966
Calderdale	17,604	0	12,983	253
Kirklees	30,810	3,433	26,997	642
Leeds	45,982	18,971	53,310	1,229
Wakefield	23,435	6,669	21,432	666
Gateshead	16,249	0	11,974	441
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	19,878	3,198	16,884	619
North Tyneside	13,727	4,971	14,527	403
South Tyneside	13,047	0	9,323	309
Sunderland	27,181	0	19,332	631
Isles of Scilly	153	0	110	0
Avon	72,332	0	53,911	2,078
Bedfordshire	35,680	16,061	42,957	1,121
Berkshire	55,335	4,836	45,492	1,434
Buckinghamshire	56,522	16,626	34,125	1,525
Cambridgeshire	53,853	178	40,271	1,039
Cheshire	81,523	0	64,934	1,426
Cleveland	50,954	0	39,956	1,597
Cornwall	35,740	0	29,616	310
Cumbria	39,300	0	31,650	458
Derbyshire	73,280	0	58,889	1,432
Devon	71,730	3,527	56,243	1,659
Dorset	38,179	10,351	39,109	1,150
Durham	50,408	0	37,363	1,027
East Sussex	43,127	83	34,412	1,357
Essex	118,256	0	99,795	2,572
Gloucestershire	40,619	0	32,604	1,194
Hampshire	121,013	20,394	84,996	3,612
Hereford and Worcester	44,228	14,651	48,794	1,277
Hertfordshire	73,300	2,964	66,077	1,962
Humberside	72,142	4,702	59,292	1,319
Isle of Wight	6,626	5,030	10,069	259
Kent	111,574	3,961	100,296	3,359
Lancashire	118,539	0	86,053	3,230
Leicestershire	72,541	5,167	60,405	1,158
Lincolnshire	44,695	0	36,399	1,159
Norfolk	57,410	15,993	41,278	868
North Yorkshire	51,502	356	43,712	1,052
Northamptonshire	46,225	8,654	44,214	1,155
Northumberland	18,237	14,157	27,823	552
Nottinghamshire	73,994	2,555	64,724	2,324
Oxfordshire	36,227	3,736	33,633	780
Shropshire	31,555	1,073	28,028	633
Somerset	33,199	3,837	28,124	594
Staffordshire	82,983	6,128	69,738	1,980
Suffolk	39,440	15,330	46,703	716

	Primary schools	Middle schools	Secondary schools	Special schools
Surrey	70,735	26,764	44,709	1,845
Warwickshire	42,448	14,136	26,323	1,371
West Sussex	48,619	9,442	39,549	1,173
Wiltshire	42,462	1,202	33,983	734
England	3,667,129	334,099	2,944,722	93,726

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Eggar: The policy evaluation projects which have been or are being through the Department's research budget since 1 January 1985 and which have included, among other elements of investigation, gathering opinions are:

Year started and project

1985 Expectations of Higher Education

Survey of Special Educational Needs in Further and Higher Education

1986 Survey of Careers Graduates

Study of Management Education, Education and Training

1987 Education and Training of Craftspeople

Undergraduate Income and Expenditure Survey

Youth Cohort Study—3rd Cohort

1988 Demand for Qualified Labour: Employer Interviews

Demand for Highly Qualified Manpower: Survey of Employers

1989 Under Fives Research

Student Income and Expenditure Survey 1988-89

Youth Cohort Study—4th Cohort

National Child Development Study—Phase 5

Charging for School Activities

1990 Surveying Out of Service Teachers: Pilot Study

Young People's Intention to Enter Higher Education

Student Loans Company

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the directors' report and financial statements from the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Yes, following the company's annual general meeting which was held on 5 December 1990. Copies of the report and financial statements are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on capital expenditure for 1991-92 on schools and further education establishments, including the voluntary aided sector.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Local education authorities have today been informed of their annual capital guidelines for 1991-92, and of the allocations for capital spending by the governors of voluntary-aided and special agreement schools in their area. These figures again amount to a big increase in local authorities' borrowing power for education capital expenditure and in grant for the governors of voluntary aided schools after substantial increases last year.

Annual capital guidelines (ACGs) for education will total £538 million compared with £485 million in 1990-91, an increase of 11 per cent.

£472 million is available for schools—an increase of 15 per cent.—and £66 million for further education.

Within the schools sector, I have again given priority to: committed expenditure on work covered by allocations in earlier years; new projects to provide new school places in areas of population growth; new projects to implement cost-effective schemes to remove surplus places.

All remaining resources have again been distributed by formula to contribute towards remedying deficiencies in existing school buildings and for work needed for effective delivery of the national curriculum. £109 million has been distributed in this way, an increase of over 50 per cent. on last year.

Within the FE sector, after meeting commitments of £42·6 million, I have given priority to equipment, where this year's allocations are nearly 50 per cent. higher than last year's.

These education ACGs represent only the minimum level of expenditure which I consider desirable. They are not grants and do not themselves give authorities the power to borrow money for capital purposes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will issue credit approvals to each authority which will give authorisation to borrow for capital spending on all services. ACGs include a small element in respect of spending from capital receipts on top of the spending which can be financed by borrowing. In addition, authorities will be able to spend futher sums from capital receipts and from their revenue budgets if they so choose. Local authority expenditure, including that on loan charges resulting from capital expenditure, is assisted by central government through revenue support grant.

I am also announcing an increase of over a third in grant available for spending on new building projects by the governors of aided and special agreement schools. I have authorised 67 new starts for major projects compared with 59 last year, and an increase of 37 per cent. in the allocation of minor works. A further 31 projects have been put on to the design list to enable detailed costed plans to be drawn up and LEAs and governors can apply for projects which require statutory proposals to be added to the list in the course of the year.

My distribution of annual capital guidelines and allocations to voluntary-aided schools should provide a

substantial boost to improvements to our school buildings and help equip them for effective delivery of the national curriculum.

Attached are lists of annual capital guidelines to individual local authorities for 1990-91 and 1991-92. Also attached are allocations for voluntary aided and special agreement schools, which include major new projects at voluntary-aided schools accepted for a start in 1991-92.

Local education authorities	*Total annual capital guidelines (£ thousands)*	
	1990-91	*1991-92*
Barking	485	573
Barnet	888	803
Bexley	1,242	1,891
Brent	687	1,233
Bromley	1,684	3,656
Croydon	1,061	1,996
Ealing	889	1,362
Enfield	1,315	1,971
Haringey	1,132	1,018
Harrow	1,073	1,057
Havering	5,881	1,945
Hillingdon	1,140	1,005
Hounslow	539	1,516
Kingston	268	1,303
Merton	3,608	1,304
Newham	5,572	8,587
Redbridge	1,577	752
Richmond	1,390	954
Sutton	2,974	3,364
Waltham	6,661	3,386
City	0	2
Camden	1,421	885
Westminster	380	624
Greenwich	3,849	676
Hackney	2,605	1,992
Hammersmith	1,047	1,235
Islington	1,079	1,010
Kensington	2,145	1,846
Lambeth	1,480	1,152
Lewisham	1,232	2,512
Southwark	5,429	1,258
Wandsworth	1,677	1,374
Tower Hamlets	7,778	10,856
Birmingham	10,494	11,083
Coventry	1,962	2,180
Dudley	3,608	9,508
Sandwell	1,647	1,313
Solihull	1,511	1,383
Walsall	1,369	1,410
Wolverhampton	783	2,067
Knowsley	2,080	1,173
Liverpool	9,742	5,763
St. Helens	5,066	2,823
Sefton	4,176	4,208
Wirral	3,354	3,379
Bolton	802	899
Bury	815	1,254
Manchester	3,062	4,697
Oldham	3,429	8,522
Rochdale	4,078	8,071
Salford	3,899	3,433
Stockport	1,300	1,919
Tameside	1,410	1,744
Trafford	9,448	3,683
Wigan	4,378	7,462
Barnsley	1,883	806
Doncaster	860	375
Rotherham	1,589	1,039
Sheffield	2,428	1,371
Bradford	9,731	9,355
Calderdale	1,514	1,661
Kirklees	1,216	3,797
Leeds	2,562	16,372
Wakefield	5,394	2,275
Gateshead	1,082	2,840
Newcastle	1,564	2,332
North Tyneside	1,265	729
South Tyneside	1,894	1,988
Sunderland	1,883	3,072
Isles of Scilly	221	16
Avon	5,653	4,945
Bedfordshire	2,409	1,974
Berkshire	4,500	3,282
Buckinghamshire	4,544	7,124
Cambridge	13,229	8,536
Cheshire	5,814	5,257
Cleveland	3,329	2,979
Cornwall	6,522	6,242
Cumbria	7,930	9,629
Derbyshire	14,653	21,330
Devon	12,984	7,715
Dorset	3,853	2,605
Durham	4,924	6,911
East Sussex	8,613	16,761
Essex	13,895	22,210
Gloucester	7,917	6,442
Hampshire	13,325	16,517
Hereford and Worcester	6,248	6,774
Hertford	6,526	6,524
Humberside	9,004	8,371
Isle of Wight	1,912	2,263
Kent	16,210	23,773
Lancashire	18,524	22,789
Leicester	11,154	6,922
Lincoln	7,387	10,016
Norfolk	2,880	2,779
North Yorkshire	4,105	4,575
Northampton	6,182	8,641
Northumberland	1,961	3,545
Nottinghamshire	3,716	5,167
Oxfordshire	3,751	6,601
Shropshire	6,319	6,582
Somerset	4,837	4,979
Staffordshire	6,375	8,644
Suffolk	7,921	9,989
Surrey	3,718	5,538
Warwick	1,507	1,644
West Sussex	3,633	3,508
Wiltshire	6,256	4,973

Voluntary-aided and special agreement schools—1991-92 allocations

LEA	*Total allocation 1991-92*	*Commitments*	*Minor works*	*Major works*	*Starts list (major projects to start 1991-92)*	*Design list projects (major projects to do initial design work 1991-92)*	*Project category*
	£000	*£000*	*£000*	*£000*			
City of London	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Camden	226	219	—	7	—	Maria Fidelis RC S	IR
Greenwich	36	—	36	—	—	—	—
Hackney	195	4	191	—	—	—	—

LEA	Total allocation 1991-92	Commitments	Minor works	Major works	Starts list (major projects to start 1991-92)	Design list projects (major projects to do initial design work 1991-92)	Project category
	£000	£000	£000	£000			
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,295	1,295	—	—	—	—	—
Islington	173	—	173	—	—	—	—
Kensington and Chelsea	2,640	2,552	—	88	—	St. Thomas More RC S	IR
Lambeth	70	43	—	27	—	La Retraite RC S	IR
Lewisham	65	—	65	—	—	—	—
Southwark	861	804	—	57	—	St. Peter's CE P, Walworth	IR
Tower Hamlets	334	80	171	83	St. Matthias CE	—	BN[1]
Wandsworth	49	—	49	—	—	—	—
Westminster	324	12	283	29	—	St. Marylebone CE S	IR
Barking	1,955	1,955	—	—	—	—	—
Barnet	718	718	—	—	—	—	—
Bexley	305	192	113	—	—	—	—
Brent	35	35	—	—	—	—	—
Bromley	198	198	—	—	—	—	—
Croydon	1,814	1,723	91	—	—	—	—
Ealing	—	—		—	—	—	—
Enfield	302	252	50	—	—	—	—
Haringey	1,163	1,110	53	—	—	—	—
Harrow	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Havering	147	125	22	—	—	—	—
Hillingdon	90	20	—	70	—	—	—
Hounslow	53	—	—	53	—	St. Mark's RC S	IR
Kingston upon Thames	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Merton	98	98	—	—	—	—	—
Newham	134	74	—	60	St. Bonaventures RC S	—	IR
Redbridge	116	116	—	—	—	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	195	195	—	—	—	—	—
Sutton	2,354	2,324	—	30	St. Philomena's RC S	—	IR
Waltham Forest	300	300	—	—	—	—	—
Birmingham	1,113	668	281	164	St. Bernadettes RC P Bournville Infants	—	BN
Birmingham	—	—	—	—	—	St. Ambrose Barlow RC P	BN
Coventry	1,369	1,119	—	250	Cardinal Wiseman RC S	—	SP[1]
Dudley	2,006	1,769	87	150	St. James CE P, Woolaston	—	IR
Sandwell	7	7	—	—	—	—	—
Solihull	55	41	—	14	—	Berkswell CE P	IR
Walsall	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	61	—	14	47	—	Holy Trinity RC P	IR
Knowsley	571	506	65	—	—	—	—
Liverpool	4,493	3,948	85	460	Broughton Hall High RC	—	SP[1 2]
	—	—	—	—	Archbishop Blanche CE S	—	IR[1]
	—	—	—	—	—	Cardinal Heenan RC S	SP[1]
St. Helens	2,149	2,089	60	—	—	—	—
Sefton	1,750	1,430	95	225	Savio RC High	—	SP[1]
	—	—	—	—	St. Monica's P	—	SP[2]
	—	—	—	—	Sacred Heart High RC, Crosby	—	SP
	—	—	—	—	—	St. Luke's CE P, Halsall	IR
Wirral	631	593	—	38	—	Plessington High RC S, Bebington	SP
Bolton	436	116	20	300	St. Joseph's RC S, Horwich	—	IR[2]
Bury	574	181	85	308	Bury High CE	—	IR[2]
	—	—	—	—	—	Our Lady of Grace RC P	IR
Manchester	827	227	120	480	St. Andrew's CE P	—	IR[2]
	—	—	—	—	Our Lady's High RC S	—	IR[2]
Oldham	174	24	125	25	—	Crompton House High CE	IR
Rochdale	436	321	115	—	—	—	—
Salford	343	253	90	—	—	—	—
Stockport	291	237	—	54	—	Harrytown High RC	BN

LEA	Total allocation 1991-92	Commitments	Minor works	Major works	Starts list (major projects to start 1991-92)	Design list projects (major projects to do initial design work 1991-92)	Project category
	£000	£000	£000	£000			
Tameside	35	5	30	—	—	—	—
Trafford	715	705	—	10	St. Margaret Ward RC P	—	IR
Wigan	1,108	688	30	390	Deanery CE S	—	BN
	—	—	—	—	—	Sacred Heart RC P	SP
Barnsley	25	—	25	—	—	—	—
Doncaster	145	15	—	130	St. Joseph's RC P	—	BN[1]
Rotherham	158	—	158	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	127	79	—	48	—	All Saints RC S	BN
Bradford	873	867	—	6	Our Lady of Victories RC P	—	IR
Calderdale	444	140	104	200	Halifax High RC	—	IR
Kirklees	218	82	104	32	—	St. John Fisher RC S	BN
Leeds	12,288	12,288	—	—	—	—	—
Wakefield	180	60	120	—	—	—	—
Gateshead	64	64	—	—	—	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	847	17	70	760	St. Paul's CE P	—	IR[2]
North Tyneside	203	203	—	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	21	21	—	—	—	—	—
Sunderland	116	79	—	37	St. Benet's RC P	—	BN
	—	—	—	—	St. Anthony's RC S	—	IR
Avon	619	471	148	—	—	—	—
Bedfordshire	600	—	—	600	Riseley Lower CE P	—	BN
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	Heath Lower CE P	—	IR[2]
Berkshire	358	128	230	—	—	—	—
Buckinghamshire	2,207	1,970	199	38	Frieth Combined CE P	—	BN
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	—	—	Waddesdon CE S	BN
Cambridgeshire	79	—	—	79	King's School CE, Peterborough	—	IR[2]
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	—	Bury CE P	IR
Cheshire	1,997	1,425	265	307	St. Nicholas RC S, Hartford	—	IR[2]
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	—	St. Mary's, Middlewich	IR[2]
Cleveland	398	—	209	189	Newland's RC S	—	BN
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	St. Dominic's RC P	—	SP
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	St. Peter's RC S	—	SP
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	Ian Ramsey CE S	—	IR
Cornwall	369	227	136	6	Millbrook CE P	—	IR
Cumbria	869	305	57	507	St. Patrick's RC J, Cleator Moor	—	SP[2]
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	Keswick P	—	SP
Derbyshire	889	794	60	35	St. Werburgh's CE P, Spondon	—	IR
Devon	567	343	159	65	St. Nicholas CE J, Sidmouth	—	IR
Dorset	3,985	2,996	60	929	Sandford St. Martin's CE P	—	IR
Dorset	—	—	—	—	St. Joseph's RC P, Poole	—	IR[2]
Dorset	—	—	—	—	St. Peter's RC S, Bournemouth	—	IR[2]
Dorset	—	—	—	—	—	St. Luke's CE P, Winton, B'mouth	BN
Durham	718	553	59	106	St. John's CE S, Bishop Auckland	—	SP
Durham	—	—	—	—	St. Charles RC P, Tudhoe	—	IR[2]
East Sussex	1,065	710	355	—	—	—	—
Essex	1,010	932	64	14	—	Bradwell CE Endowed	IR
Gloucestershire	1,229	797	222	210	Corse CE P	—	BN
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	Holy Apostles CE P	—	IR
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	St. Peter's RC High	BN
Hampshire	1,926	1,926	—	—	—	—	—
Hereford and Worcester	1,356	826	—	530	Hagley RC S	—	BN[1]
Hertfordshire	1,656	1,532	124	—	—	—	—
Humberside	46	46	—	—	—	—	—
Isle of Wight	210	—	210	—	—	—	—
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	IR[2]
Kent	2,837	1,315	122	1,400	Judd School	—	—

LEA	Total allocation 1991-92	Commitments	Minor works	Major works	Starts list (major projects to start 1991-92)	Design list projects (major projects to do initial design work 1991-92)	Project category
	£000	£000	£000	£000			
Lancashire	4,051	2,728	460	863	St. Theresa's RC P, Penwortham	—	BN
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	St. Gregory's RC P, Chorley	—	SP[2]
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	St. Matthews's RC P, Skelmersdale	—	SP
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	Baines High, Poulton Le Fylde	—	IR[2]
Leicestershire	598	64	8	526	St. Clare's RC, P, Coalville	—	BN[2]
Lincolnshire	276	61	—	215	Spalding Grammar School	—	IR
Norfolk	13	—	—	13	—	Archibishop Sancroft CE S	IR
North Yorkshire	775	6	183	586	St. Peter's RC P, Scarborough	—	IR[2]
—	—	—	—	—	St. Aidan's CE High	—	IR[2]
—	—	—		—	—	St. Wilfred's RC P, York	IR
Northamptonshire	27	—	—	27	—	St. David's RC Middle	IR
Northumberland	747	347	92	308	Tritlington CE First	—	BN
—	—	—	—	—	St. Joseph's RC Middle	—	BN
—	—	—	—	—	St. Mary's RC First	—	BN
Nottinghamshire	135	36	99	—	—	—	—
Oxfordshire	2,526	2,218	172	136	St. Mary's CE P, Chipping Norton	—	SP[1]
Salop	238	105	133	—	—	—	—
Somerset	2,041	903	191	947	St. Dubricus CE P, Porlock	—	BN[2]
—	—	—	—	—	Long Sutton CE P	—	IR[2]
—	—	—	—	—	Chewton	—	IR[2]
—	—	—	—	—	—	Trull CE P	BN
Staffordshire	979	672	79	228	St. Mark's CE P	—	BN[2]
—	—	—	—	—	—	St. George's RC P	IR
Suffolk	345	190	100	55	St. Albans RC S	—	BN
Surrey	839	87	—	752	Salesian RC High	—	IR[2]
—	—	—	—	—	—	St. Nicholas F & M, Shepperton	IR
Warwickshire	788	273	—	515	St. Paul's Combined CE P	—	IR[2]
West Sussex	1,875	1,312	558	5	St. Mary At Clymping CE P	—	IR
Wiltshire	1,068	930	38	100	St. John's RC P, Trowbridge	—	IR

Note:—
Project category codes as follows:
BN—Basic need
SP—Surplus places
IR—Improvement/replacement
[1]—Approved statutory proposals
[2]—Ex 1990-91 design list

University Teachers

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will meet the Association of University Teachers to discuss its members' careers.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding reply 11 December 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend met a delegation from the Association of University Teachers on 11 December. Various issues were discussed, including matters bearing on the careers of university staff.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will review the administrative workloads imposed on university professors.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding reply 11 December 1990]:* It is for university managements to determine the distribution of staff responsibilities within each institution.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Vietnam

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development aid is being provided to Vietnam; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 13 December at column *476*.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts he has made to ascertain the type and amount of aid needed in Cambodia for reconstruction and development; and when such aid will be forthcoming.

Mrs. Chalker: At their meeting in Paris from 23 to 26 November the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the co-chairman of the Paris conference on Cambodia and the UN Secretary General's representative agreed a draft settlement document, which, inter alia, contains a declaration on the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia. This sets out how Cambodian reconstruction and development needs will be addressed in the context of a comprehensive political settlement. Britain played its full part in preparing the document and is ready to join other donors to consider Cambodia's aid priorities, initially at a reconvened Paris conference. In the meantime we are supporting the work of non-governmental organisations and UN agencies in Cambodia.

Poland

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of her Majesty's Government towards assisting the economy of Poland; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government fully support the Polish Government in their efforts to stabilise the economy and introduce a free market system. Our policy is to provide technical assistance, help improve trade and other links with the EC, and to contribute to multilateral financial support, whilst seeking to avoid adding to Poland's debt burden.

Bilateral technical assistance is given through the know-how fund for eastern Europe, in which £50 million is pledged to Poland; this gives priority to encouraging and assisting measures which will help introduce quickly a free market system. We have also provided bilaterally a $100 million grant to the international stabilisation fund which is funded by a group of Western donors to help underpin the value of the zloty while the economy is liberalised.

We play a leading role in the EC's programme of project assistance for Poland. We have promoted the improved trade access Poland has gained from the EC and the strengthening of other Community links. We look forward to the start of negotiations for an EC-Poland association agreement to expand upon the current trade and co-operation agreement.

We also contribute through international financial institutions to multilateral financial support for the countries programme. We have participated in the Paris club rescheduling of Poland's official debt and are taking part in a special Paris club working group on the long-term problem of Poland's debt.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of spending to date of know-how funding for Poland and make a statement on the future of the know-how fund.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 10 December at column *281*.

Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union are currently eligible for assistance from the fund. Further countries may be included as and when they demonstrate satisfactory progress towards encouraging market-driven democracies.

Bangladesh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will undertake an urgent review, jointly with the other major aid donors to Bangladesh, to consider what additional aid could be offered to Bangladesh, especially linked to health, education, housing and development of infrastructure; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have regular discussions with the Government of Bangladesh and with other major aid donors. Bangladesh's aid requirements are considered at annual meetings of the aid group led by the World Bank. At the last such meeting in April 1990 an action plan for policy reform was adopted.

Last month we participated in a mid-term review of progress in implementing this plan, when it was agreed that the Government of Bangladesh would invite donors for further discussions on its investment priorities and on means of ensuring more effective use of aid, prior to the next aid group meeting in April 1991.

Our bilateral aid programme to Bangladesh is substantial, at over £50 million a year, and includes assistance for health, education and infrastructure. We recently participated in a multi-donor mission to appraise a further major programme of assistance for population and family health. We currently await information on the interim Government's intention in these, and other areas of development and look forward to continued dialogue.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that continued aid to Bangladesh will rest entirely on progress made towards the genuine restoration of representative democracy and observance of basic human rights in Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We have welcomed the appointment of Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as acting President and the announcement that free and fair elections will be held within 90 days. We hope everyone will heed the call for peace by leaders of all the main political parties so that normal life can be resumed as soon as possible.

The observance of human rights and good government are among the factors we take into account in allocating aid to developing countries. These considerations apply to Bangladesh as much as to any other developing country receiving British aid.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the Government's financial assistance to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to facilitate its location in London.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government will contribute up to £40 million for the first three years rent and refurbishment costs of the bank's chosen headquarters. The Government propose to execute a lease on a temporary headquarters

building for the bank and to contribute rent for an agreed period, and refurbishment of the building, from within the £40 million available. I have today laid before the House a minute informing the House of the details. Copies of the minute have been placed in the Library of the House.

TRANSPORT

Bicycle Bans

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy in respect of bicycle bans in city centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Decisions on whether to prohibit bicycles or any other class of vehicle from town centres or other roads are for individual local authorities. The Department has issued advice in our local transport note publication LTN 1/87 on pedestrian zones, "Getting the Right Balance". This refers to the need to consider exempting cycles from vehicular prohibitions in pedestrianisation schemes, if satisfactory alternative routes do not exist or cannot be created. We have further advised, in local transport note 1/89 "Making Way for Cyclists", that when a right of way for vehicles is removed from a road, a continuing right of way for cyclists should be provided unless there are overriding reasons not to do so.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much local highway authority expenditure he intends to accept for transport supplementary grant in 1991-92.

Mr. Rifkind: I have decided to accept a net local highway expenditure of £636 million for transport supplementary grant—TSG— in 1991-92. A total of £318 million grant is to be paid in support of capital expenditure on local authority road schemes, and bridge assessment and strengthening. This is an increase of 17 per cent. on last year's grant for road schemes. Structural maintenance work on bridges eligible for grant for the first time has been allocated £45 million. Grant is paid at a flat rate of 50 per cent. on schemes and works accepted from the bids made by the 108 local highway authorities in England.

I have also decided to issue supplementary credit approvals of £90 million and total annual capital guidelines of £362 million, bringing allocation for local roads, parking and bridge maintenance for 1991-92 to £771 million. The figure for local roads and parking for 1990-91 is £635 million.

In deciding the distribution of transport supplementary grant for 1991-92, I have considered carefully the transport policies and programme documents submitted by each local highway authority, and have looked at the extent to which authorities' programmes relate to roads of more than local importance.

Accepted expenditure for minor works has almost doubled, rising from £38 million for 1990-91 to £75 million for 1991-92. The new figure includes £31 million given for local safety schemes, which for the first time in 1991-92 are eligible for grant on all roads and not only on roads of more than local importance. This is in line with the suggestions of the Parliamentary Advisory Committee on Transport Safety. It is up to local authorities to decide which schemes to carry out; this level of finance could however support around 3,500 new local safety schemes which in only 12 months could save 80 lives, 1,000 serious injuries, and in all prevent 5,000 casualties.

The grant will also provide £262 million in 1991-92 for continued support of 271 major local authority road schemes which are under construction or about to start; 35 new major schemes—over £1 million—have been accepted into the programme. The total cost of these new schemes is £166 million and the expenditure on them in 1991-92 is £42 million.

Among these new schemes are major improvements on the A13 in Essex serving east London and docklands, phase 2 of the Reading relief road, and the support of a major bypass of the A34 in Cheshire and Stockport. Fifteen of these schemes are bypasses to town centres and urban areas, which will greatly enhance the quality of life and improve the local environment in some of our historic towns. The remaining schemes are for upgrading existing roads and for improving access to urban and inner city areas.

The amount of expenditure accepted for TSG, the amount of grant, the accepted expenditure for bridge maintenance and, the total of annual capital guidelines and special credit approvals for each local highway authority are set out in the tables. Councils are being informed individually today of their own figures.

Local authority capital expenditure on roads 1991-92

Authority	*Accepted expenditure for bridge strengthening and assessment*[1] *£ million (1)*	*Net total expenditure accepted for transport supplementary grant £ million (2)*	*Transport supplementary grant £ million (3)*	*Total credit*[2] *£ million (4)*
London boroughs				
City of London	0·199	0·618	0·309	0·455
Barking and Dagenham	0·197	3·670	1·835	2·255
Barnet	0·528	1·030	0·515	0·803
Bexley	0·300	2·500	1·250	1·858
Brent	1·167	1·386	0·693	2·557
Bromley	0·135	6·110	3·055	4·404
Camden	0·547	1·288	0·644	1·220
Croydon	0·012	1·538	0·769	1·452
Ealing	0·190	3·172	1·586	2·690
Enfield	0·990	9·000	4·500	4·666
Greenwich	0·148	0·000	0·000	0·521
Hackney	0·420	1·048	0·524	1·143
Hammersmith and Fulham	0·370	0·858	0·429	0·859

Authority	Accepted expenditure for bridge strengthening and assessment[1] £ million (1)	Net total expenditure accepted for transport supplementary grant £ million (2)	Transport supplementary grant £ million (3)	Total credit[2] £ million (4)
Haringey	0·227	2·132	1·066	1·577
Harrow	0·560	6·566	3·283	6·651
Havering	0·518	1·278	0·639	0·903
Hillingdon	1·120	12·704	6·352	9·537
Hounslow	0·145	0·944	0·472	0·926
Islington	0·080	0·724	0·362	0·953
Kensington and Chelsea	0·290	0·460	0·230	0·890
Kingston upon Thames	0·255	1·226	0·613	1·184
Lambeth	0·100	0·596	0·298	0·421
Lewisham	0·431	8·540	4·270	8·371
Merton	0·078	0·018	0·009	1·651
Newham	0·886	1·630	0·815	2·948
Redbridge	0·253	0·832	0·416	0·727
Richmond upon Thames	0·315	0·816	0·408	0·620
Southwark	0·118	0·898	0·449	2·530
Sutton	1·338	1·982	0·991	2·330
Tower Hamlets	0·691	0·990	0·495	1·277
Waltham Forest	0·110	0·778	0·389	0·687
Wandsworth	1·169	4·348	2·174	2·963
Westminster	1·100	1·692	0·846	4·384
Metropolitan districts				
Bolton	0·565	2·528	1·264	1·468
Bury	0·370	0·866	0·433	0·578
Manchester	0·515	18·790	9·395	10·074
Oldham	1·735	3·896	1·948	2·864
Rochdale	0·376	0·928	0·464	0·605
Salford	0·650	3·138	1·569	3·064
Stockport	1·013	3·480	1·740	1·844
Tameside	1·112	1·380	0·690	1·309
Trafford	0·250	0·276	0·138	1·531
Wigan	0·350	3·692	1·846	2·800
Knowsley	0·401	3·340	1·670	1·806
Liverpool	0·360	0·000	0·000	0·611
St. Helens	0·353	15·562	7·781	8·740
Sefton	0·888	1·238	0·619	0·823
Wirral	0·475	0·000	0·000	0·848
Barnsley	0·527	5·342	2·671	3·236
Doncaster	2·854	4·584	2·292	4·474
Rotherham	0·215	1·324	0·662	0·908
Sheffield	1·000	10·024	5·012	8·680
Gateshead	0·175	1·512	0·756	1·042
Newcastle upon Tyne	0·480	1·978	0·989	2·829
North Tyneside	0·020	0·630	0·315	0·409
South Tyneside	0·236	1·922	0·961	1·097
Sunderland	0·474	3·826	1·913	2·542
Birmingham	2·500	20·512	10·256	15·524
Coventry	0·258	5·586	2·793	3·301
Dudley	0·189	2·888	1·444	2·522
Sandwell	1·781	2·360	1·180	1·557
Solihull	0·850	0·884	0·442	1·752
Walsall	1·802	0·880	0·440	2·120
Wolverhampton	1·095	12·320	6·160	7·486
Bradford	0·154	4·560	2·280	3·442
Calderdale	0·411	0·734	0·367	0·491
Kirklees	1·032	1·898	0·949	1·605
Leeds	0·827	3·974	1·987	3·260
Wakefield	1·802	2·426	1·213	2·745
Shire counties				
Avon	1·174	17·710	8·855	10·568
Bedfordshire	1·846	6·456	3·228	3·481
Berkshire	0·455	5·414	2·707	4·779
Buckinghamshire	0·970	3·698	1·849	2·385
Cambridgeshire	1·956	3·740	1·870	2·606
Cheshire	1·390	11·002	5·501	6·797
Cleveland	0·412	7·378	3·689	4·804
Cornwall	0·750	7·916	3·958	5·512
Cumbria	2·035	6·624	3·312	3·634
Derbysnire	1·138	2·316	1·158	6·332
Devon	2·153	10·124	5·062	6·838
Dorset	1·090	5·540	2·770	3·687

Authority	Accepted expenditure for bridge strengthening and assessment[1] £ million (1)	Net total expenditure accepted for transport supplementary grant £ million (2)	Transport supplementary grant £ million (3)	Total credit[2] £ million (4)
Durham	0·850	7·318	3·659	4·060
East Sussex	0·524	10·462	5·231	6·963
Essex	0·475	12·896	6·448	8·569
Gloucestershire	0·348	4·182	2·091	2·840
Hampshire	1·115	24·358	12·179	13·099
Hereford and Worcester	0·827	6·454	3·227	3·981
Hertfordshire	0·760	6·506	3·253	5·655
Humberside	2·000	11·178	5·589	8·307
Isle of Wight	0·135	1·942	0·971	1·282
Kent	1·450	74·458	37·229	39·538
Lancashire	4·250	22·464	11·232	13·594
Leicestershire	0·770	11·286	5·643	6·532
Lincolnshire	2·010	3·680	1·840	3·530
Norfolk	1·830	9·464	4·732	6·326
Northamptonshire	0·660	7·728	3·864	5·098
Northumberland	1·460	6·286	3·143	3·993
North Yorkshire	2·160	12·314	6·157	9·321
Nottinghamshire	1·335	11·110	5·555	7·267
Oxfordshire	0·378	5·968	2·984	3·998
Shropshire	0·739	8·710	4·355	5·621
Somerset	0·480	6·026	3·013	4·166
Staffordshire	0·751	7·854	3·927	6·182
Suffolk	1·980	18·596	9·298	11·715
Surrey	3·971	10·242	5·121	8·947
Warwickshire	1·670	1·902	0·951	2·765
West Sussex	0·286	8·252	4·126	4·882
Wiltshire	0·029	5·376	2·688	4·429

[1] Included in (2).
[2] Annual capital guidelines plus supplementary credit approvals.

MV Derbyshire

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with the International Maritime Organisation about the fate of the MV Derbyshire and her sister ships.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has had no discussions with the International Maritime Organisation about the fate of the Derbyshire and her sister ships. A copy of the report of formal investigation into the loss of the Derbyshire was, however, sent to the IMO for information.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date his Department received a copy of the research paper by Professor Bishop on the sinking of the MV Derbyshire; on what date it was referred to the marine accident investigation branch of his Department; what consultations he is having on the basis of it; when he expects to receive a report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The marine accident investigation branch—MAIB—requested a copy of the paper from the Royal Institution of Naval Architects: this was received in early August. Copies of the paper were received in the Department's marine directorate in September. The MAIB is still examining the paper, along with the Tyne Tees television underwater film of the Kowloon Bridge. A report on the conclusions reached will be submitted to the Secretary of State shortly who will then decide whether or not to reopen the formal investigation which took place between October 1987 and March 1988.

Ships' Plans

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirement there is to ensure that copies of as-built plans of vessels constructed in the United Kingdom are kept during the working life of the vessels.

Mr. McLoughlin: There is no statutory requirement for the retention of "as built" plans of vessels constructed in the United Kingdom. The provision of such plans is usually a matter of contract between the builder and the purchaser.

Networker Trains

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current state of discussions between his Department and British Rail over the introduction of Networker multiple-unit electric trains for the longer-distance journey to Sussex and Kent.

Mr. McLoughlin: British Rail is considering, in the light of its other financial and investment priorities, how soon this project can start.

Roads, Kent

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether all the road improvements in Kent authorised by his Department in connection with improved access to the channel tunnel will be completed by the time the tunnel is open in the summer of 1993.

Mr. Chope: The "missing link" in the M20 between Maidstone and Ashford is under construction. Statutory orders have been made authorising the widening of the

section of M20 between junctions 5 and 8 and the provision of a new A20 route between Dover and Folkestone. We are on target to have all these improvements in place by the time the channel tunnel is due to open in summer 1993.

London Regional Transport

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a detailed breakdown of how the extra £3 billion available for investment to London Regional Transport is to be allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Government grant to London Transport will be nearly £2·5 billion over the next three years. This should allow LT to invest approaching £3 billion over the same period. Of the grant, £748 million is allocated to the Jubilee line extension and £164 million to the east-west crossrail. LT has yet to decide how it wishes to allocate the remainder.

British Rail (Trespass)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many actions for trespass have been initiated by British Rail in *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1990; and how many cases have been successful.

Mr. Freeman: This Department has no figures readily available. These are detailed matters for British Rail and the British Transport police.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for, or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department regularly commissions surveys of opinions, for example on motor cyclists' attitudes to vehicle safety, among other types of survey. A complete list of surveys is maintained, but it it not possible to identify from this list those surveys that have included questions of opinion. I regret therefore that the information could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Speedlink

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if Ministers have been approached regarding a possible private takeover or replacement of the British Rail Speedlink service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from BR that a number of private sector companies have expressed interest in finding ways of operating some Speedlink traffics. British Rail will welcome any serious propositions that have advantages for both sides.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if ministerial approval was sought for the closure of British Rail's Speedlink service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The British Rail chairman kept us informed throughout the board's review of Speedlink. The decision to close the Speedlink network from July 1991 is a commercial matter for the BR board and does not require ministerial approval.

Privatisation

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the privatisations with which his Department has been involved since 1979, indicating in each case the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* The information is as follows:

£ million

Company	*Date of sale*	*Net proceeds to Government*	*Current capitalisation*
National Freight Consortium	1982	5·0	702·3
Associated British Ports	1983	45·4	377·4
(Secondary sale by HMT)	1984	51·0	—
British Airways	1987	853·0	1,132·0
BAA	1987	1,181·6	2,089·2

ScotRail

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to meet the senior management of ScotRail to discuss improvements in the Glasgow Central—London Euston passenger service and other matters relating to rail services within Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend will be having regular meetings with British Rail senior management to discuss a variety of railway matters, although he has no immediate plans to visit ScotRail. His predecessor my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson), visited ScotRail as recently as 16 November.

HEALTH

Prescription Charges

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent representations he has received advocating the extension of exemption from prescription charges to men aged 60 to 64 years;

(2) if he will extend exemption from prescription charges to men aged 60 to 64 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the past three months one letter from an hon. Member and two letters from members of the public have been received. The present exemption arrangements protect those who are likely to have difficulty in paying charges and, in the case of men and women who have reached state pension age, reflect the

change of financial circumstances which they would generally experience at this point in their lives. Persons below state pension age who are not otherwise exempt, but who require frequent medication, can limit their outlay by buying a prepayment certificate. We therefore have no plans to change the present arrangements.

St. George's Hospital, Tooting

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the number of patients awaiting heart surgery at St. George's hospital, Tooting, London, who are residents living within the area covered by the Wandsworth health authority;

(2) what is the present number of patients awaiting heart surgery treatment at St. George's hospital, Tooting, London;

(3) what has been the longest period of time a person on the waiting list for heart surgery treatment at St. George's hospital, Tooting, has been waiting in the past three years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about numbers on waiting lists and waiting times for admission to hospital is not available centrally by individual hospital or by specific condition. The hon. Member may wish to write to Dr. Enid Vincent, the chairman of Wandsworth district health authority, for the information.

Heart Attacks (Women)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women had heart attacks for each of the last three years for which figures are available aged (i) 20 to 30, (ii) 31 to 40, (iii) 41 to 50, (iv) 51 to 60 and (v) 61 to 70 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available in the form requested. The table gives, by age, the numbers of deaths of women caused by acute myocardial infarction in the last three years for which figures are available.

	1987	*1988*	[1]*1989*
Age			
20-29	8	10	5
30-39	68	50	45
40-49	302	259	242
50-59	1,605	1,390	1,305
60-69	6,836	6,437	6,193

[1] Provisional.
Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the names of those people appointed to be chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to announce the names of those appointed to the chair and trustees of the Bradford NHS trust; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today placed in the Library a list of appointments to those trusts established today. A list of those people to be appointed as chairmen and non-executive directors of the trusts to be established on 21 December will be placed in the Library shortly.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the procedure followed for public consultation for second wave trust will differ from those in the first wave; and if hospitals which were not approved in the first wave will be obliged to put any second wave applications out for public consultation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The procedure to be followed for public consultation for second wave trusts will not differ from the first wave. The applications from those hospitals and units which were not approved in the first wave have already been the subject of full public consultation. It would, therefore, suffice for the region concerned to write to the bodies to whom it had sent the original consultation document, stating that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be willing to consider trust status subject to specific issues having been addressed, specifying the conditions and seeking further comments.

Child Care

[illegible]rsby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has received from the local authority associations about the cost of providing child care services for Eritrean children seeking asylum in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has received estimated costs from the local authority associations for London boroughs involved in providing child care services for newly arrived unaccompanied Eritrean children seeking asylum. Consideration is now being given to the case for special funding.

The Gulf (Casualties)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the contingency provision for the reception of casualties by national health service hospitals, in the event of a military option in the Gulf.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) on 16 November at column *248*. Contingency provision is under continuous review in consultation with the Ministry of Defence.

Tehidy Hospital, Cornwall

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he anticipates announcing his decision on the future of Tehidy hospital, Camborne, Cornwall, following the decision of the South Western regional health authority at its meeting of 4 December.

Mr. Dorrell: When we receive the papers from South Western regional health authority, concerning the proposed siting of the Camborne Redruth hospital, including the future of Tehidy hospital, we shall consider carefully all of the views expressed and make a decision without delay.

Clinical Standards

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) with which organisations he has recently met in order to discuss the work of the clinical standards advisory group;

(2) if he intends to meet with the Royal College of Midwives to discuss the work of the clinical standards advisory group.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State met the presidents of the royal colleges and other leaders of the dental, medical, midwifery and nursing professions earlier this year, work on the clinical standards advisory group has been taken forward by officials. This work is continuing. We shall keep the need for any further meetings under review.

Function, Banqueting House

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the purpose and full cost of the function organised by his Department at the Banqueting house, Whitehall on the evening of Tuesday 11 December;

(2) if he will list the names of those attending the function organised by his Department at the Banqueting house, Whitehall on the evening of Tuesday 11 December.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The dinner held at the Banqueting house, Whitehall on the 11 December was part of a two day business conference on NHS trusts and was attended by people including Ministers, NHS managers, members of the NHS Management Executive and departmental officials. The dinner cost £9,959·43.

Cook-chill Foods

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cook-chill production facilities were introduced into hospitals in each year since 1985.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department's guidelines on cook-chill catering have been supplied to the managers of every hospital and school cook-chill production unit.

Mr. Dorrell: Copies of the Department's "Guidelines on Cook-Chill and Cook-Freeze Catering Systems" were sent to every district health authority in England in July 1989. Copies are also available in the Library.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Dorrell: The information readily available relates to the register of surveys maintained by the Central Statistical Office. The table lists surveys commissioned by the Department of Health since 1988 and surveys which from their titles appear to relate to health and personal social services from 1985 to 1988 commissioned by the former Department of Health and Social Security.

Department of Health

- Misuse of drugs campaign 1988-89: Creative development stage 2
- Nursing recruitment campaign—Telephone response follow up
- Cold weather campaign evaluation 1988-89
- Misuse of drugs 1988-89: Creative development stage 3
- NHS financial management training scheme research
- Nursing: Youth concept research
- Drugs 1988-89: Campaign evaluation stage 7
- Nursing tracking 1989-90: Two stages June and September
- Cold weather publicity campaign 1989-90: Evaluation
- Nursing tracking study wave III and wave IV (1990)
- Drugs tracking study stage 8
- Drugs 1990: Doublehead research
- Organ donation: Regional research
- Nursing qualitative evaluation
- Cold weather postal follow-up research
- Drugs 1990: Qualitative evaluation
- Nursing follow-up of campaign response: Student nurses
- Drugs tracking stage 9

Department of Health and Social Security

- Nursing recruitment campaign evaluation
- Image of the NHS
- Anti-heroin campaign tracking
- AIDS-drugs advertising development research
- AIDS longterm tracking
- Organ donor next of kin—Qualitative research
- AIDS youth campaign tracking research (November 1986 and February 1987)
- Tracking public attitudes to the social security reform campaign 1987
- AIDS-drugs doublehead animatics research—Reaction to advertising roughs
- AIDS-drugs advertising: Animatic/doublehead communication check
- Attitudes to nurse training
- Stage 6 of a tracking survey to evaluate the anti-drugs campaigns
- Attitudes of West Indians and Asians to AIDS
- Family credit advertising development research
- Nursing recruitment—Advertising communication check
- 1986-87 anti-heroin campaign creative development
- Anti-heroin campaign evaluation stage 4
- Qualitative research into attitudes to condoms (AIDS)
- AIDS anti-body test leaflet comm. check research pilot and main survey
- National and regional publicity needs for the blood transfusion service
- AIDS-drugs campaigns: Qualitative evaluation research
- Monitoring attitudes to social security 1988
- Prescribing publicity
- Organ donor research
- Misuse of drugs 1988-89 campaign: Advertising development research
- 1988 nursing recruitment campaign: Initial evaluation research
- Nursing careers: 1988 tracking study
- Attitudes to methods of payments of benefits
- Attitudes to giving blood
- Determinants of labour supply behaviour families in long-term unemployment
- Attitudes to unemployment and claiming benefit while unemployed
- Smoking among secondary schoolchildren in 1986 (DHSS/WO/SHHD)

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Space Research Corporation

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on non-military research done by the Space Research Corporation.

Mr. Lilley: None.

Vietnam (Trade Restrictions)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the restrictions on trade with Vietnam; and if he has any proposals to lift them.

Mr. Redwood: The import of those goods which are normally restricted from state trading countries are totally restricted from Vietnam. The products covered by this

embargo are matches, footwear, TV sets, gloves, headgear, some agricultural products and a wide range of textile products. The United Kingdom has, however, opened quotas for imports of a number of products as shown in the table. The import of any other goods from Vietnam is not restricted.

These restrictions are subject to regular review, in the light of foreign and trade policy considerations.

In addition, goods, and technical documents for such goods, listed in schedule 1 to the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1989, as amended, require an export licence before they can be exported to any country.

I have no proposals to remove such controls for Vietnam. However, together with our partners in the Co-ordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls—COCOM—we are currently examining the scope for modifications to the list of goods subject to export control.

Product	*Quota level (1990)*
Tableware of porcelain, china or pottery; ornaments or statuettes	£23,100
Bedlinen, tablelinen, curtains; synthetic yarn and woven fabrics of synthetic yarn (MFA categories: 20, 23, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40)	7 tonnes

Footwear Industry

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government assistance will be given to the British shoe industry in the coming months.

Mr. Leigh: Firms in the footwear industry can apply for assistance from a range of Government schemes for encouraging enterprise and good practice.

Levitt Group

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will meet the chairman of FIMBRA to discuss the introduction of systematic investigations for its larger members in the light of the Levitt group collapse.

Mr. Redwood: I meet the chairmen of the self-regulating organisations under the Financial Services Act, including FIMBRA, from time to time to discuss a range of regulatory issues.

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure that more thorough procedures in relation to capital adequacy will in future prevent the occurrence of further cases similar to the Levitt Group collapse.

Mr. Redwood: Rules and procedures relating to the capital adequacy of persons carrying on investment business are a matter for the Securities and Investments Board and the regulatory bodies recognised under the Financial Services Act.

Cyprus (Defence Equipment)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure that defence equipment and munitions supplied to Cyprus have not been re-exported in a manner that is inconsistent with Government policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Defence and defence-related equipment for sale to Cyprus or elsewhere which is subject to export control under the Export Goods (Control) Order 1989 requires an export licence, for which my Department is the issuing authority.

Each application for a licence is considered on its merits in consultation with other Departments taking into account the type of equipment, its end use and end user. If there are any reasons to doubt the end use or end user of the equipment a licence would not be issued.

There are penalties, enforceable through the courts, for any person who makes a false statement or provides information known to be false to obtain an export licence.

If the hon. Member has particular cases in mind and can provide me with information I shall investigate.

Motor Sport (Exhibition)

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the British motor sport industry to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Leigh: Yes. The Department received in November an application for an exhibition, and I am pleased to say that approval was subsequently given.

British Technology Group

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition about the working of the British Technology Group for display in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Leigh: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to him on 3 December. I understand that arrangements for the exhibition are in hand.

Iraq (Supergun)

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the day on which his Department was first made aware that Iraq was acquiring export material for a major gun or launcher.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* My Department first became aware that Iraq was acquiring export material for a major gun or launcher in April of this year.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what special checks were made of the 44 items of piping sent to Iraq which became known to be for military purposes.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* My Department does not make physical checks on goods for export except at the request of exporters or HM Customs and Excise. The granting of licences is dependent on information about the nature and use of products which the exporter is obliged by law to provide.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he was made aware of changes in the specifications of the steel for the Iraqi order placed with Walter Somers.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* I understand that it was a change in the specification which

led my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) to approach my Department on behalf of Walter Somers.

Burma

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration Her Majesty's Government has given to assistance regarding contracts signed between British Petroleum and the Government of Burma/Myanmar, for oil exploration.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 13 December 1990]:* Neither we nor BP has any knowledge of such contracts.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights (Kosovo)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning abuse of human rights in the Kosovo region of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received a number of representations from organisations and members of the public in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Cambodia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the level of co-operation between the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and Prince Sihanouk in *(a)* diplomatic activity relating to the United Nations plan for Cambodia and *(b)* military activity relating to the continuing war in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Khmer People's National Liberation Front, the Sihanoukists and the Khmer Rouge coordinate their diplomatic activity on the United Nations plan and otherwise through the coalition known as the National Government of Cambodia—NGC. We understand that, although the three parties share the objective of installing the NGC in Phnom Penh, their armed forces are autonomous and co-operate on an ad hoc basis.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about recent arms supplies to the warring parties in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: China has announced that it has ceased supplying arms to the forces of the Cambodian resistance parties. The draft comprehensive settlement document agreed in Paris on 23 to 26 November by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, the co-chairmen of the Paris conference on Cambodia and the United Nations Secretary-General's representative provides for the cessation of all outside arms supplies to all the Cambodian parties.

Mr. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on Pol Pot's current role in the Khmer Rouge; and what steps he is taking to prevent his participation in the United Nations peace plan for Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1985 Pol Pot renounced his principal posts in the Khmer Rouge. His sole remaining official title is head of the Academy of National Defence.

The framework document agreed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council provides that the members of the Supreme National Council
"should be acceptable to each other".
This was designed to exclude Pol Pot. The draft settlement document agreed in Paris on 23 to 26 November also includes comprehensive human rights provisions to guard against any return to the horrors of the past.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration was given to the inclusion of the ceasefire agreement between Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk agreed in Tokyo in June in the United Nations framework for Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The five permanent members of the UN Security Council took the results of the Tokyo meeting between Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk, including the reference to voluntary self-restraint and a ceasefire, into account in elaborating their framework for a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the relationship of Son Sen and Khieu Samphan with the Khmer Rouge Government of 1975 to 1978; what official positions they held between 1975 and 1978; what positions they currently hold in the Khmer Rouge; and whether Her Majesty's Government supported their membership of the new Supreme National Council.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: From 1975-1978, Son Sen was Vice-Premier for National Defence and a member of the standing committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea central committee. He was also described in 1978 as chairman of the committee of the general staff of the Cambodian Revolutionary Army. He is now a member of the Supreme National Council, deputy head of the Party of Democratic Kampuchea, supreme commander of the Army of Democratic Kampuchea and Minister attached to the National Government of Cambodia's co-ordinating committee for national defence.

Khieu Samphan was Deputy Premier and Minister of National Defence in GRUNC—the Royal Cambodian Government of National Unity—when the Khmer Rouge took power in April 1975. In August 1975 he was described as Deputy Premier for general affairs attached to the Premier's office and Commander-in-Chief of the Cambodian People's National Liberation Armed Forces. In 1976 he replaced Prince Sihanouk as Cambodian Head of State, becoming chairman of the praesidium of Democratic Kampuchea. He is now a member of the Supreme National Council, leader of the Party of Democratic Kampuchea and the National Government of Cambodia's Vice-Premier in charge of national defence.

The framework for a comprehensive political settlement agreed by the five permanent members of the Security Council specifies that
"the composition of the Supreme National Council, including the selection and number of its members, should be decided by the Cambodian parties through consultations".
We played no part in the process that led to the formation of that Supreme National Council.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any information linking Son Sen with the administration of Tuol Sleng prison during the period 1975 to 1978.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: During the period 1975-78, Son Sen was Cambodian Vice-Premier in charge of national defence. We have no information linking Son Sen with Tuol Sleng during this period.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what military, diplomatic or financial support has been provided since 1979 by Her Majesty's Government to the Cambodian non-communist resistance parties.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Although we have no dealings with the resistance coalition National Government of Cambodia, we have since 1979 provided political support for Prince Sihanouk and the Kampuchea People's National Liberation Front—KPNLF. This has included invitations to Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann to visit London for high-level talks. We have also given limited financial support in the form of humanitarian assistance for the inmates of Sihkanoukist and KPLNF camps on the Thai-Cambodian border, provided as donations in kind: foodstuffs, clothing, basic domestic equipment, and so on.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the dates of talks Her Majesty's Government have held, or intend to hold, with representatives of Prince Sihanouk, of the Khmer Rouge, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front and the Hun Sen regime as part of the political settlement for Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No formal talks with the Cambodian parties have been held or are planned. We maintain informal contact with the two non-communist partners in the resistance coalition and have indicated a willingness to talk to representatives of the Hun Sen regime to urge them to co-operate in restoring peace to Cambodia on the basis of the five's framework. We have no contact with the Khmer Rouge.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the dates of talks Her Majesty's Government have held with the Governments of Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Japan and Australia about the United Nations framework plan for Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: After each of their eight meetings in 1990, the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council briefed, as a group or individually, representatives of the Governments to whom the hon. Member refers. In addition, we are in close and regular contact with the diplomatic missions of these Governments in London. Japan and Australia, as co-chairmen of two of the Paris conference committees, took part in the working group meeting in Jakarta on 9 and 10 November. In addition, we held formal bilateral talks on Cambodia with the Prime Minister of Thailand on 17 October, and with representatives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 30 November.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many meetings have been held by the member states of the European Community in the last year to discuss the situation in Cambodia; and what issues were discussed at what level of representation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: One meeting of the European political co-operation—Asia working group convened this year specifically to discuss Cambodia. Cambodia regularly features on the agenda of EPC meetings at both official and ministerial level.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what future meetings are planned between representatives of the European Community and the Association of South-East Asian Nations to discuss the situation in Cambodia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no plans for a meeting between EC and ASEAN representatives specifically to discuss Cambodia. But we expect Cambodia to be on the agenda of the next EC-ASEAN ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 30 and 31 May 1991.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received a copy of the report by Raoul Jennar on Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have read with interest Raoul Jennar's report of his recent visit to Cambodia. I also refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 12 December, at column *421*.

Bangladesh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will initiate discussions with the Bangladesh Government to discuss *(a)* what assistance Her Majesty's Government could offer Bangladesh in the preparations for forthcoming elections for President and Parliament and *(b)* what help Her Majesty's Government could offer in monitoring the conduct of these elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We would be ready to consider any request in these areas made by the Bangladesh authorities.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold early talks with the President and Government of Bangladesh on action being taken to restore democracy and ways in which Her Majesty's Government could increase aid to Bangladesh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no plans to do so. The acting President has spoken of the need to hold free and fair elections as soon as possible, and my right hon. Friend referred in his message to him to the importance we attach to this task.

Our existing bilateral aid programme to Bangladesh is substantial, at over £50 million a year. Our contribution to Bangladesh through multilateral institutions is also significant. In 1988, the last year for which figures are available, it amounted to £28·5 million.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will have discussions

with the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth about what role might be played by the Commonwealth in *(a)* preparations for forthcoming elections in Bangladesh for President and Parliament and *(b)* monitoring the conduct of those elections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Commonwealth involvement in presidential and parliamentary elections in Bangladesh would be a matter for the Bangladesh Government to take up with the Commonwealth Secretary General.

Iraq-Kuwait Border

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government, or representatives of alliances of which the United Kingdom is a member, had with Kuwait or Iraq prior to 2 August, concerning adjustment or delineation of the border between Iraq and Kuwait.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has not been involved in such discussions since before 1961 when the British Government terminated the exclusive agreement of 1899 with the Kuwaiti Government and recognised Kuwait as a sovereign independent state.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Six opinion surveys have been conducted on behalf of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in October 1986, March 1987, April 1987, July 1988, August 1989, August 1990. The purpose of the surveys was to monitor trends in public opinion, and to enable the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to improve its presentation of foreign policy issues.

Iraq

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by his Department to draw attention to United Nations findings of the effect of sanctions on Iraq in the run-up to 15 January 1991.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations has not made available any such findings.

The Gulf

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice Her Majesty's Government have to offer British nationals resident in the Gulf region.

Mr. Hurd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has the following advice for British nationals resident in Bahrain, Qatar, the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, and the cities of Riyadh and Tabuk. Following the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 678, British dependants are advised to leave the area well before the deadline of 15 January which has been set by the UN Security Council for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait. This is a common sense precaution, and does not imply any worsening of the situation in the last few days.

Advice to visitors remains unchanged. Tourists should not visit the area, but those who have necessary business to conduct should not be deterred. They should register their arrival with the nearest British diplomatic mission, and should tell the mission how long they expect to stay.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to supply the remaining four cattle brains to Dr. Harash Narang at the public health laboratory in Newcastle to further his diagnosis of BSE.

Mr. Gummer: My officials will supply Dr. Harash Narang with the remaining cattle brains he requires when suitable material becomes available and he is able to take delivery of it.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Curry: Opinion surveys, including market research connected with public information publicity campaigns, conducted for, or on behalf of this Department since 1 January 1985 are as follows:

June 1987
Survey of Consumer Attitude to Food Additives
Purpose: Publicity planning
June 1988
Food Hygiene: Report on a Consumer Survey
Purpose: Publicity planning
September 1989
Food Safety: Qualitative Survey
Purpose: Publicity planning
November 1989
Food Safety: Quantitative Survey
Purpose: Publicity planning
December 1989
Food Attitudes Monitor
Purpose: Campaign evaluation and publicity planning
March 1990
Public Attitudes to Food Additives
Purpose: Campaign evaluation and publicity planning
April-May 1990
Attitudes to Food Labelling Survey (England and Wales)
Purpose: Publicity planning
June 1990
Awareness and Understanding of BSE
Purpose: Publicity planning
November 1990
Research into Effectiveness of the 1990 MAFF Touring Exhibition (Parts 1 and 2)
Purpose: Campaign evaluation and publicity planning
November 1990
Report on a Qualitative Research Study into 'Food Sense' Publications
Purpose: Campaign evaluation.

Research Laboratories

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the locations of the *(a)* veterinary laboratories, *(b)* Agricultural Development Advisory Service farm and countryside service laboratories, *(c)* Agricultural Development Advisory Service

research and development laboratories, *(d)* fisheries laboratories and *(e)* food science laboratories that have closed since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 December 1990]:* Laboratories exist to meet the experimental and analytical needs of the Ministry's scientific work programme. In order that this can be carried out in the most efficient and economical way, it is sometimes necessary for facilities at particular sites to be closed or for new ones to be constructed. The table illustrates this by listing the locations of laboratories which have closed and by identifying the places to which work has been transferred. It remains our policy to keep all such facilities under review to ensure that we have the most cost effective mix of resources for current and future requirements.

Closure and Effect on programme

(a) Veterinary Laboratories

Cardiff—work redistributed amongst Carmarthen, Shrewsbury, Worcester and Langford.
Chester—work redistributed amongst Bangor, Barton Hall (Preston) and Shrewsbury.
Gloucester—work redistributed amongst Langford and Worcester.
Leeds—work transferred to Thirsk.
Liverpool—work transferred to a new laboratory at Barton Hall (Preston)
Northampton—work redistributed amongst Cambridge, Reading and Sutton Bonington.
Shinfield (Reading)—some AI work privatised. Other work transferred to CVL (Weybridge).

Since 1979 there has been a programme of rationalisation and investment in the most modern analytical equipment which has permitted an increased workload to be handled more cost effectively at fewer sites. Work which would have been carried out at closed sites is now dealt with at the most appropriate remaining site in relation to location, the discipline involved and the particular requirements in question. Closed laboratories and current facilities are listed, together with their relevant specialisms.

(b) ADAS FCS Laboratories

Closed

Accrington—microbiology
Bangor—entomology and plant pathology
Caernarfon—microbiology
Cardiff—microbiology
Evesham—plant pathology and entomology
Liverpool—wildlife and storage biology
Newcastle-upon-Tyne—analytical chemistry, microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Shardlow—analytical chemistry, microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Shrewsbury—microbiology

Current

Bristol—plant pathology
Cambridge—analytical chemistry, microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Cardiff—entomology
Carmarthen—wildlife and storage biology
Kirton—plant pathology and entomology
Leeds—microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Reading—microbiology and entomology
Starcross—analytical chemistry, microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Trawscoed—microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Wolverhampton—analytical chemistry, microbiology, plant pathology and entomology
Wye—plant pathology

(c) *ADAS RDS Laboratories*

Welshpool—transferred to Tolworth.

(d) *Fisheries Laboratories*

Humber Laboratories (Hull)—work on fish by-products transferred to Torry Research Station. Other work terminated.
London—transferred to Lowestoft.

(e) *Food Science Laboratories*

1 site in London, 2 sites in Norwich—work transferred to new purpose built laboratory at Norwich.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. MacGregor: None.

Committees

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many sittings of *(a)* Standing and *(b)* Select Committees were held during the mornings of the 1989-90 parliamentary Session.

Mr. MacGregor: *(a)* 290 sittings *(b)* 237 sittings.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for, or on behalf of the Duchy since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Chris Patten: None.

EMPLOYMENT

Special Needs

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines he has issued to the training and enterprise councils on the employment of people with special needs.

Mr. Jackson: I have placed a contractual requirement on training and enterprise councils to ensure that they pay particular attention to provision for those with special needs in their local community. My Department has produced material for TECs to promote good practice in the training of people with special needs which will help this group to take advantage of appropriate employment opportunities.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the impact on the work load of the nuclear installations inspectorate of the reduction of the pressurised water reactor programme and the life-extension of older nuclear stations.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive reviews annually the staffing of its nuclear installations inspectorate. On 1 December 1990 there were 159 nuclear

inspectors in post in the inspectorate. Current plans to recruit to a level of 172 inspectors take into account the reduction of the pressurised water reactor programme and the additional work associated with the life extension of older nuclear stations.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the concept of safety audit, referred to in the Health and Safety Executive's last annual report, is applied to the Health and Safety Executive and its staff.

Mr. Forth: No. The HSE recommends the use of safety auditing techniques for organisations where the hazards and risks arising from their activities justify this approach.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the Health and Safety Executive staff are currently working on indoor air quality; and what was the total number of visits paid by inspectors to sample or monitor indoor air quality at employers' premises.

Mr. Forth: Many HSE staff provide policy, technical or inspectorial input into aspects of indoor air quality as part of their duties, and it is not possible to give a precise figure for those currently involved.

The HSE does not separately identify visits paid by inspectors in connection with indoor air quality. However, a sample survey has suggested that, in the period 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990, inspectors now based in the HSE's field operations division made some 6,500 indoor air pollution visits to investigate topics including Legionnaire's disease, radon and sick building syndrome.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many samples were taken by the Health and Safety Executive for examination for legionella contamination in wet cooling towers; and how many by local authorities in the last 12 months.

Mr. Forth: Information on the number of samples taken by the Health and Safety Executive for legionella contamination in wet cooling towers is not centrally available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The HSE does not hold information on the number of such samples taken by local authorities.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training has been received by the Health and Safety Executive agricultural inspectorate on the enforcement of the Food and Environment Protection Act; and if he will give dates of the training, the duration of the training and specify the training given to inspectors in the Sheffield area office.

Mr. Forth: Inspectors in the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate attended a one-day training course on the enforcement of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985—FEPA—between February and April 1986. Inspectors also received a further one-day's training between November 1986 and February 1987 on the regulations made under FEPA. Arrangements are made for all agricultural inspectors who joined the HSE after this training had been completed to attend a two-day training course which now includes the enforcement of FEPA and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988—COSHH.

Two one-day courses were held on 12 and 13 March 1986 and 12 and 13 November 1986 on the background, structure and enforcement of FEPA and its associated regulations and codes of practice for agricultural inspectors in the Sheffield area. One inspector recruited by HSE and posted to the area after this training had been completed attended a two-day course on 24 to 26 October 1988 on the enforcement of FEPA and COSHH.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the Health and Safety Executive's scientific staff joined from *(a)* the public sector and *(b)* industry in the years 1988-90; and how many in each category still work for the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Forth: The number of scientific staff who joined in the years 1988-90 is 74, of whom 68 still work for the Health and Safety Executive. Previous experience is taken into account at the recruitment stage and for career development, but it is the nature of the work undertaken by applicants which is of greatest importance, not where they were employed. The Health and Safety Executive does not keep such information on its personnel records system.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the Health and Safety Executive's field force's time is spent on *(a)* planned basic inspection of fixed sites, *(b)* planned basic inspection of construction sites, *(c)* section 6 casework, *(d)* complaints, *(e)* accident investigations, *(f)* hazard surveys and *(g)* other duties.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is set out for 1989-90, the latest year for which information is available.

	Percentage
Planned basic inspection of fixed sites[1]	26·0
Planned basic inspection of construction sites	5·3
Section 6 casework	1·5
Complaints	3·7
Accident investigations[2]	10·3
Hazard surveys[3]	5·3
Other duties	47·9

[1] Excludes follow-up inspections.
[2] Includes the investigation of dangerous occurrences.
[3] This term is imprecise but has been taken to mean field work on the assessment of systems and designs, including that associated with the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations and with the preparation of advice to planning authorities about developments at or near major hazard sites.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many premises are recorded under the Health and Safety Executive's inspection rating system under each of the categories 0 to 5; and how many are recorded as not having had an inspection within the last five years.

Mr. Forth: The rating system used by inspectorates in the Health and Safety Executive's field operations division FOD makes no provision for recording premises by category.

A total of 754,525 fixed premises are registered with FOD's agricultural, factory and quarries inspectorates. On 1 April 1990, a total of 363,302 were recorded as not having received a planned inspection within the last five years. These include many premises where the risks are low and which have not yet entered the field for a planned

inspection under the rating system. They could also include premises which may have been visited in this period for purposes other than a planned inspection.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what work will be cut, delayed, or contracted out to enable the Health and Safety Executive's research and laboratory services division to achieve its stated aim of devoting more resources to organisational and human factors; what expert systems are planned; and how many staff will be devoted exclusively to this priority.

Mr. Forth: The proposed expansion in the area of organisational and human factors will not take place at the expense of other work. Instead, the in-house strength of the RLSD in this area will be increased by redirecting vacancies arising in work areas that have reached maturity or by means of new scientific posts created through efficiency savings. The normal practice of contracting out part of the programme will continue in all work areas in order to draw on a wider range of expertise.

Expert systems are planned in the following areas: the investigation of wire-rope deterioration and failure, provision of hazard information relating to frictional ignition of gases and vapours, clerical control of laboratory analytical services, selecting the correct statistical test for a particular set of data, venting of dust explosions, and diagnosis of computer malfunctions in chemical process plant. One person will be devoted exclusively to expert systems, while various other staff will have the work as part of their remit.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the Health and Safety Executive's expenditure in the years 1975, 1978 and 1985 to 1990 has been provided directly by the Government as grant in aid.

Mr. Forth: The proportions of the Health and Safety Executive's expenditure provided by grant in aid in each year were:—

	Percentages
1975-76	98
1978-79	96
1985-86	95
1986-87	94
1987-88	92
1988-89	89
1989-90	87
1990-91	76

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current proportion of staff time spent by the Health and Safety Executive in *(a)* Crown court and *(b)* magistrates courts prosecutions.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the electrical equipment certification service and the research and laboratory services division of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Forth: Continuing changes in the operating environment of the electrical equipment certification service—EECS—including developments in the European Community, have raised the question how the EECS can be organised most effectively and whether a change of status is necessary. The unions representing EECS staff have been informed of this review and the Health and Safety Executive has invited the EECS management board to consider a range of options for the future. When the management board has expressed its view, the HSE will consider whether any substantial change in the status of EECS appears to be justified. If so, the preferred option will be investigated in more detail and interested parties will be consulted about it.

The research and laboratory services division will continue to generate much of the scientific and technological base that underpins HSE's policy and operational activities. As in the past, the division's programme will adapt to developing priorities resulting from technological advances, EC developments, new HSE commitments, and so on.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance remains to be issued by the Health and Safety Executive on (i) the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, (ii) noise, (iii) pesticides and (iv) air quality.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive and the industry advisory committees that advise the Health and Safety Commission keep the application of health and safety regulations under continual review and relevant guidance is produced and updated as necessary. Further guidance planned will cover the following:

(i) *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (COSHH)*
- control measures
- carcinogens
- approved code of practice for the prevention or control of Legionellosis
- micro-organisms
- peripatetic workers
- sensitisers

(ii) *noise*
- employees leaflet

(iii) *pesticides*
- fumigation using phosphine
- fumigation using methyl bromide
- approved code of practice for the safe use of pesticides in non-agriculture industries
- sulphuric acid used in agriculture use of wood preservatives in buildings

(iv) *air quality*
- guidance on "sick building syndrome" is under consideration

In addition, further industry specific guidance on the COSHH and noise regulations will be produced by HSE's national interest groups in collaboration with industry and trades unions.

Pesticides

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest estimate of the delay between application for, and approval of, pesticide evaluation; and what is the backlog of substances requiring reappraisal.

Mr. Forth: Applications for approval for non-agricultural pesticides are processed by the Health and Safety Executive. For new pesticides it takes between one and two years from the date the fee is received until I and other Ministers grant approval based on advice from the independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides. For

reformulated products or changes in methods of application or use the period is usually as little as three to nine months.

The HSE has initiated a programme to review all pesticide active ingredients on a rolling programme. There are 77 active ingredients which have yet to be reviewed under this programme.

Evaluations for agricultural pesticides are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Specialist Inspectors

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many specialist inspectors work in each of the seven field consultant groups in the disciplines of *(a)* construction, *(b)* electrical, *(c)* occupational hygiene, *(d)* chemical, *(e)* mechanical and *(f)* explosives.

Mr. Forth: The number of specialists in each discipline for each field consultant group is shown in the table.

FCG Location	*Discipline*					
	Construction	*Electrical*	*Occupational Hygiene*	*Chemical*	*Mechanical*	*Explosives*
East Grinstead	1	2	1	3	2	0
Luton	1	2	2	1	3	0
Cardiff	1	2	2	3	5	0
Birmingham	1	2	1	2	2	0
Leeds	2	1	1	3	3	0
Manchester	2	2	2	3	3	0
Edinburgh	2	1	2	1	2	0

Note: All explosives problems encountered by field consultant groups are referred to the explosives inspectorate in the HSE's technology division.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of specialist inspectors employed by the Health and Safety Executive; how many vacancies exist; and how many specialist inspectors have left the organisation in the last two years.

Mr. Forth: On 1 December 1990, the HSE employed 208·5 specialist inspectors and had 26·5 vacancies. During the years 1988-89 and 1989-90, a total of 35 specialist inspectors left HSE.

Agricultural Premises

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the the Secretary of State for Employment how many children were killed on agricultural premises in the years 1978 to 1989.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the number of fatal injuries in the agricultural industry to non-employed children aged one to 15 years as reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agriculture inspectorates between 1979 and 1989-90:

Year	*Number of fatalities*
1979	24
1980	10
1981	13
1982	13
1983	5
1984	4
1985	10
1986/87[2]	10
1987/88[2]	7
1988/89[2]	10
1989/90[2][1]	6

[1] Provisional.
[2] Year commencing 1 April.

Information is not available for 1978.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents caused or related to cattle were reported to the Health and Safety Executive in 1974, 1985 and 1989; and what proportion of total agricultural accidents these represent.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not available for 1974 and 1985. Injuries involving boars cannot be separated from cattle and the number of injuries in agriculture involving bulls, other cattle and boars reported to the Health and Safety Executive's factory and agricultural inspectorates for 1988-89 and 1989-90 is provided in the table together with the proportion of total injuries reported in agriculture that they represent:

Year[1] and employment status	*Severity of injury*			
	Fatal	*Major*	*Over 3 day*	*Total*
1988-89				
Employee	2	22	51	75
Self-employed	2	8	8	18
Non-employed	—	5	[3]	5
Percentage of injuries in agriculture	7	6	5	5
1989-90[2]				
Employee	—	26	45	71
Self-employed	—	7	5	12
Non-employed	2	2	[3]	4
Percentage of injuries in agriculture	4	7	4	5

[1] Year commencing 1 April.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Not reportable.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many Health and Safety Executive staff are working specifically on the ergonomics of agricultural machinery.

Mr. Forth: At present there are no Health and Safety Executive staff working specifically on the ergonomics of agricultural machinery. However, the matter is one that is taken fully into account by inspectors during the course of inspection visits to agricultural premises and, more particularly, during visits to manufacturers and importers when considering compliance with section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what backlog of uninspected premises exists for the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate.

Mr. Forth: There is no backlog. The agricultural inspectorate uses an inspection rating system to help target its preventive inspection programme but this is also influenced by seasonal factors, peripatetic activities and the employment status of premises.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive's agricultural inspectorate are taken for not using appropriate guards on machinery.

Mr. Forth: Information is only readily available for 1987-88; in that year 151 out of 416 prosecutions taken by Her Majesty's agricultural inspectorate were in connection with the fencing and construction of machinery. Information for more recent years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Peripatetic Workers

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when guidance on the application of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations to peripatetic workers is to be issued.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive intends to publish specific guidance on the application of the COSHH regulations to peripatetic workers during 1991. This will supplement existing HSE publications on the regulations themselves and other guidance on the application of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act to peripatetic workers.

Health and Safety Offences

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring he carries out of the level of fines given by magistrates for health and safety offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Health and Safety Executive already monitors the average level of fines in all courts, and publishes the results annually. More recently the HSE has also begun to monitor fine levels in magistrates courts, and I have asked it to let me have the results of that exercise in due course.

Occupational Health

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will update the 1976 employment medical advisory service survey which ascertained the number of physicians and nurses employed in industry who have specialist qualifications in occupational health;

(2) what action has been taken by the Health and Safety Executive on the proposals presented in the 1976 EMAS document entitled, "Occupational Health Services—The Way Ahead".

Mr. Forth: The aim of the 1977 publication "Occupational Health Services—The Way Ahead" was to stimulate debate. This led up to an inquiry by the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology. The Committee's 1984 report on occupational health and hygiene services called for a voluntary code of practice to extend the provision of occupational health services. To meet this the Health and Safety Commission—HSC—has embarked on an action programme to encourage employers to review their occupational health needs and make suitable arrangements to obtain advice. This programme includes published guidance and promotional activities intended to raise awareness of occupational health. Where employers are already making adequate provision they are encouraged to make their facilities more widely available. The programme has also involved local campaigns by HSE staff, and industry specific initiatives such as seminars, conferences and publications. During 1991, the HSC is due to evaluate the action programme and review the nature and extent of occupational health provision in Great Britain.

The results will be used in drawing up recommendations on the future of the action programme and whether the existing approach to the provision of occupational health should be continued.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what occupational health statistics are collected by the Health and Safety Executive; and what plans there are to extend the statistics collected.

Mr. Forth: "Health and Safety Statistics 1988-89", published as a supplement to the *Employment Gazette* for November 1990—Vol. 98, No. 11—gives a full description of the available statistics relating to occupational health. It covers information collected by the Health and Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985, and statistics derived from other sources.

The Health and Safety Executive has initiated two measures to supplement these statistics:

(a) a "trailer" to the 1990 labour force survey which asked respondents whether they had suffered from any work-related illness during the previous year. Data from this survey will be available by mid-1991.

(b) a consultant-based register of work-related dermatitis which started operation on a trial basis on 1 August 1990.

The Health and Safety Commission will be reviewing the 1985 regulations next year, and will be considering proposals for possible changes to the arrangements for the reporting of occupational disease by employers.

Industrial Premises, London

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of industrial premises in the Health and Safety Executive London North area have *(a)* fewer than 25 employees and *(b)* more than 500 employees.

Mr. Forth: In the Health and Safety Executive London north area, 73·6 per cent. of fixed premises currently registered with the factory inspectorate have fewer than 25 employees and 9·4 per cent. have more than 500 employees.

Mechanical Presses

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what number of accidents at the tools of mechanical presses occurred in the years 1965, 1970 to 1974, 1979, 1985 and 1989.

Mr. Forth: Such accidents are not separately identified in the Health and Safety Executive's current databases of

reported occupational injuries. Relevant information which is taken from annual surveys up to 1974 and further surveys in 1979 and 1985 is shown in the table. No such survey was carried out in 1989.

Accidents at the tools of power presses and press brakes[1]

	Number
1965	441
1970	203
1971	159
1972	153
1973	152
1974	145
1979	48
1985	25

[1] Reportable injuries notified to Her Majesty's factory inspectorate; severity is not recorded.

Factory Inspectors

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors have less than five years' experience in each of the main inspection grades.

Mr. Forth: The main inspection grades are considered to be inspector of factories 1B and inspector of factories 1A (principal inspector). Out of a total staff in post figure of 289 inspectors of factories 1B, 97 have less than five years' experience in the grade. Out of a total staff in post figure of 162 inspectors of factories 1A, 57 have less than five years' experience in the grade.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested in the form required could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the various parts of the Employment Department group produce annual reports which provide information on research projects carried out for the Department. I would be happy to provide the hon. Member with reports for the relevant period if he so wished.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People (Benefits)

11. **Mr. Alfred Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has had about benefits for disabled people from the organisations that represent them.

Mr. Scott: Over 70 organisations commented on "The Way Ahead" and I met representatives from some of the groups, including the Disability Benefits Consortium, to hear their views. Well over 100 organisations have sent in comments on the consultation document on the disability living allowance issued in August and comments are starting to come in on the explanatory note on the disability working allowance published on 12 November.

Maintenance

12. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average maintenance assessment under the current system; and what is the average cost of supporting a mother and child through the benefit system.

13. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average maintenance assessment under the current system; and what is the average cost of supporting a mother and child through the benefit system.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friends to my earlier answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns).

15. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will define the criteria which will be applied to cases where maintenance cannot be recovered from the father because of threatened violence.

Mr. Newton: Our intention is that where a caring parent declines to co-operate in establishing liability for maintenance for the children, trained and experienced senior officers should consider whether in the circumstances there is good cause for the refusal. We shall be giving careful consideration to the guidance they will be given, but it would clearly not be right to create a position in which a threat of violence could be seen as a way of escaping maintenance.

24. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the new Child Support Agency will have powers periodically to reassess maintenance orders.

Mr. Jack: Liability to maintain a child can last for many years. Much can change in that period. The Child Support Agency will be required to review maintenance payable every year so that those changes can be taken into account in an orderly way. These annual reviews will be automatic, removing the burden of initiating action from the caring parent.

Residential Care

14. **Sir Robert McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of spending on benefits for people in residential care and nursing homes in 1978-79 and in 1990; and what is the real terms increase.

21. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the level of spending on benefits for people in residential care and nursing homes in 1978-79 and in 1990; and what is the real term increase.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1978-79, supplementary benefit payments amounting to some £10 million were made to people in residential care and nursing homes. In 1990, the corresponding figure in income support was some £1·2 billion, a real term increase in expenditure of 287 per cent. per head.

Child Benefit

16. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the percentage of take-up of means-tested benefits for children; and what is the percentage of take-up of child benefit.

Mr. Jack: From the latest available evidence we estimate that around 90 per cent. of income-related benefit is claimed and four out of five people eligible for income related benefit actually made a claim. A similar proportion applies for families with children. Take-up of child benefit is virtually 100 per cent.

State Pension

17. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the value of the state pension if it had been uprated in line with the increase in prices or earnings whichever was the higher since 1983.

23. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the value of the state pension if it had been uprated in line with the increase in prices or earnings whichever was the higher since 1983.

Miss Widdecombe: The present value of the retirement pension, had it been uprated in this way, would be £55·30 for a single pensioner and £88·50 for a married couple. But the additional cost of this to the national insurance fund would be about £3·8 billion this financial year. This implies a rise in the national insurance contributions paid by an employee on average earnings of approximately £1·90 per week and £3·50 for his employer.

National Insurance

19. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent steps have been taken by his Department to crack down on those who wilfully seek to evade their legal responsibility to pay national insurance.

Mr. Jack: Following the establishment of the contributions unit in April this year significant progress has been made. We have strengthened the complement of national insurance inspectors, improved the training they receive and increased the number of visits to employers.

Such visits are designed to identify irregularities in the payment of contributions and to ensure that the benefit entitlement of employees is properly protected. The unit is well on the way to reducing the amount of underpaid contributions and further progress can be expected next year when the unit is given agency status.

Pensioners

20. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of recently retired pensioners receive income from savings.

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that, in 1987, over 80 per cent. of recently retired pensioners received income from savings.

Regional Medical Officers

22. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any proposals relating to the role of regional medical officers in local appeal tribunals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The constitution of a social security appeal tribunal is a legally qualified chairman and two lay members who have knowledge or experience of the local area. Medical appeal tribunals consist of a legally qualified chairman and two consultant medical practitioners. These people are part-time and are completely independent.

Regional medical officers have no role in social security appeal tribunals or medical appeal tribunals. Their function is to provide medical advice to adjudication officers in deciding benefit claims.

The Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill, currently in Committee, makes provision for a new disability appeal tribunal consisting of a legally qualified chairman, a medical practitioner and a person experienced in dealing with the needs of disabled people.

We have no proposals to alter the role of regional medical officers.

Mobility Allowance

25. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people currently receive mobility allowance; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79.

Mr. Scott: I am pleased to say that the number of people receiving mobility allowance has increased sixfold from 95,000 in 1978-79 to 615,000 in 1989-90.

Social Fund

26. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the social fund.

Mr. Scott: Since the social fund was introduced, over two and a half million interest-free loans and over half a million non-repayable community care grants have been awarded, at a total value of over £500 million. The fund continues to make a valuable contribution to assisting a large number of people in the greatest need.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out, at 1989 prices, the amount of social fund money for *(a)* loans and *(b)* grants for each office in Leeds for the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Scott: The total allocations made to offices in Leeds in 1989-90 and 1990-91, at 1989 prices, are set out in the table.

The allocations for 1991-92 will be announced nearer the time.

	1989-90		*1990-91*[1]	
	Loans £	*Grants* £	*Loans* £	*Grants* £
Leeds East	591,480	246,151	621,995	234,238
Leeds North	699,290	299,660	750,115	284,088
Leeds North-West	392,307	173,467	410,322	159,708
Leeds South	243,725	105,300	238,312	102,226
Leeds West	326,381	142,116	313,601	209,749

[1] 1989 prices as reckoned by the gross domestic product deflator.

Disability Benefits

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the numbers of additional people who will receive *(a)* lower rate attendance component of the disability living allowance, *(b)* lower rate mobility component and *(c)* higher rate mobility component, if the age limit of 65 years for the receipt of the disability living allowance were removed, and the additional expenditure incurred in total in each case.

Mr. Scott: Estimates of the additional number of beneficiaries are *(a)* 250,000 *(b)* 150,000 *(c)* 1,350,000.

The corresponding expenditure figures in the first full year are *(a)* £165 million *(b)* £100 million *(c)* about £2 billion. All estimates are necessarily subject to large margins of uncertainty.

Young Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list all the changes to benefits for those persons aged 16 and 17 years since 1987, showing *(a)* their financial consequences and *(b)* the numbers affected;

(2) if he will list all the changes to entitlement rules for those persons aged 16 and 17 years who are unemployed and seeking income maintenance.

Miss Widdecombe: Information in the form requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the two main changes in entitlement to income support for 16 and 17-year-olds were:

(a) In September 1988 income support was withdrawn from the majority and instead the Government gave a guarantee of a place on youth training to all young people who wanted one. The decrease is net social security benefit expenditure was estimated to be £88 million in the first year, but the Government spent over £1,000 million on the youth training scheme in 1988-89, of which a substantial proportion was in the form of training allowances paid in lieu of income support to people on youth training. The number of young people affected by this measure is estimated at 100,000.

(b) In July 1989 16 and 17-year-olds who were forced to live independently were given entitlement to income support at the rate normally paid to 18 to 24-year-olds. The higher rate was also paid to all young people receiving only housing benefit. It is estimated that 17,000 young people benefited, at a cost of £3·7 million in the first year.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had with disability organisations concerning the disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: More than 70 organisations commented on "The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917) which set out the proposed structure for the disability working allowance. On 5 April I held a meeting with the Disability Benefits Consortium, to discuss its views. On 12 November we issued a note on the disability working allowance setting out our proposals in more detail; and disability organisations are starting to send us their comments. We shall continue to give careful consideration to all the comments we receive.

Taxi Fares (Reimbursement)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances taxi fares will be paid to claimants attending a medical appeal tribunal; what is the procedure for claiming taxi fares in advance; what is the procedure for reimbursing claimants their taxi fares; what is the average length of time taken to reimburse the claimants' taxi fares; and how much has been paid out in taxi fares.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of social security appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of social security and medical appeal tribunals, his honour Judge Derek Holden. The hon. Member may care to contact his office direct to obtain this information.

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average pensioner's income expressed in money and real terms *(a)* today and *(b)* in May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1987, the last year for which figures are currently available, the average total net pensioner income was £99·90 per week. In 1979 it was £42·20, or £75·90 at 1987 prices.

Appeals

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what considerations he has given to the payment of interest on awards made by the social security appeal tribunals when the date of the award is more than six months after the submission of the claim by the appellant; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of social security appeal tribunals is a matter for the president, his honour Judge Derek Holden. Appeals are heard as soon as possible, depending on the inquiries that have to be made, and the number of other appeals awaiting hearing. We have no plans to pay interest on any arrears of benefit a tribunal might award.

Statutory Sick Pay

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total number of people in Wales in the last available year claiming statutory sick pay at *(a)* the lower rate and *(b)* the higher rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In 1988-89, some 5·6 million people in the United Kingdom received statutory sick pay. It is estimated that at that time about 90 per cent. would have received the higher rate. Information is not collected in a form which would enable separate figures to be given for Wales.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Norris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average increase in community charge between 1989-90 and 1990-91, and the average increase in external finance between 1989-90 and 1990-91 for *(a)* all local authorities in Scotland, *(b)* separately for regional, district and island authorities and *(c)* for authorities separately by political control.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is as follows:

	Average increase in personal community charge 1989-90 to 1990-91	*Average increase in external finance 1989-90 to 1990-91*
	per cent.	*per cent.*
a. All local authorities	8·71	6·42
b. Regions	8·57	6·03
Districts	9·39	8·09
Islands	1·32	9·92

	Average increase in personal community charge 1989-90 to 1990-91 per cent.	Average increase in external finance 1989-90 to 1990-91 per cent.
c. i. Regions		
Labour	10·50	4·68
Independent	4·84	12·86
No overall control	−3·63	11·14
ii. Districts		
Labour	10·52	5·70
Independent	7·54	17·16
Conservative	−17·21	46·16
Liberal Democrat	−0·24	24·88
SNP	5·77	13·53
No overall control	16·82	20·67
iii. Islands		
Independent	1·32	9·92

Notes:

1. The average increases in the community charge relate to the personal community charge only and are therefore exclusive of water charges.
2. Because non-domestic rate income did not become part of Government-determined support for local authorities' current expenditure until 1990-91 it is not possible to make a proper comparison of "external finance" between 1989-90 and 1990-91. The figures in the second column are all based on comparing revenue support grant and specific grants for 1989-90 plus the original Scottish Office estimate of each local authority's non-domestic rate income for that year with aggregate external finance for 1990-91.
3. Part *(c)* of the reply reflects composition of each authority at current rate.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any plans to exempt *(a)* students and *(b)* student nurses from the poll tax in 1991-92;

(2) if he will introduce legislation to grant exemption from the poll tax for those visiting Scotland on exchange schemes;

(3) if he has any plans to end the 20 per cent. contribution rule applying to all poll tax payers whatever their income for 1991-2;

(4) if he proposes to exempt non-working partners from the poll tax in 1991-92;

(5) if he has any proposals to exempt elderly people being cared for at home, by relatives or friends from the poll tax in 1991-92.

Mr. Allan Stewart: *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* The Government are committed to a fundamental review of local government finance.

Agricultural Co-operatives

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial support will be given to the Organisation for the Promotion of Agricultural Co-operatives in Scotland in 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The 1990-91 Supply Estimates —class XV, vote 2—provide for grant of up to £168,000 for the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society. Funding for 1991-92 has still to be determined.

Community Charge

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he is having with *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* student organisations, *(c)* student nurses and *(d)* community groups in order to discuss the review of the poll tax in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The community charge is discussed regularly at meetings between Ministers and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. As part of the review of the community charge, my right hon. Friend will be interested to receive the views of all groups and bodies with an interest in the charge.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the studies made by the Scottish Office to assess the impact of the poll tax upon *(a)* students, *(b)* pensioners, *(c)* single parents and *(d)* school leavers in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The community charge arrangements in Scotland, as they affect particular groups, have been monitored by the Scottish Office since the charge was introduced and, where appropriate, changes have been made.

Prisoners (Medical Care)

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners in Scotland have received medical care outside prison in the past year; and how many have received medical care in the private sector.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: During the period April 1989 to March 1990, the latest for which figures are available, 246 prisoners were admitted to public hospitals. Central records are not kept of the number of prisoners who attended external medical facilities as outpatients, nor of whether any of these were private sector facilities.

Special Needs

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he has taken to ensure that each training and enterprise board makes acceptable provision within its area for those with special needs.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There are no training and enterprise boards in Scotland. However, local enterprise companies will be expected to demonstrate in their business plans how they intend to provide for people with special training needs.

Penal Institutions

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the design capacity for all Scottish penal institutions and *(b)* the actual current occupation levels for these institutions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table:

	(a) Design capacity	(b) Occupation level as at 30 November 1990
HMP Aberdeen	150	147
HMP Barlinnie	933	834
HMYOI Castle Huntly	144	114

	(a) Design capacity	(b) Occupation level as at 30 November 1990
HMI Cornton Vale	219	132
HMYOI Dumfries	146	107
HMP Dungavel	147	135
HMP Edinburgh	526	448
HMP Friarton	57	73
HMP and HMYOI Glenochil	678	621
HMP Greenock	179	184
HMP Inverness	87	104
HM Remand Institution Longriggend	177	167
HMP Low Moss	400	251
HMP Noranside	104	111
HMP Penninghame	73	70
HMP Perth	449	389
HMP Peterhead	275	111
HMYOI Polmont	412	344
HMP Shotts	540	360
Total design capacity	5,696	4,702

At 30 November 1990, a total of 550 places were out of use because of policy restrictions or for maintenance/refurbishment work; this means that there were 5,146 places available for use on that date.

NHS Trusts

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those applications from hospitals within Scotland for trust status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Four expressions of interest in NHS trust status have been received in respect of hospitals at Forfar, the Royal Scottish national hospital, the unit at the Foresterhill site in Aberdeen comprising the royal infirmary, maternity hospital and children's hospital, and the South Ayrshire unit comprising the hospitals at Ayr and Ballochmyle. None has yet progressed to the formal application stage.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Office commissions a variety of surveys, a significant number of which contain questions on views and attitudes. It would involve disproportionate cost to distinguish in any consistent way those surveys which contained such opinion questions from those which did not.

Training Schemes

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the total expenditure on YTS in *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Shetland in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90;

(2) what proportion of the total expenditure on YTS in *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Shetland in the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 was met by the Training Agency, private sector and local authority, respectively;

(3) what is the estimated outturn of expenditure on training in *(a)* Orkney and *(b)* Shetland in the current financial year; and what proportion of that expenditure is likely to be attributed to each of the Training Agency, private sector and local authority.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 13 December 1990]:* Local Training Agency expenditure on youth training in Orkney and Shetland in 1988-89 and 1989-90 is shown in the table. The figures for 1987-88 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	Financial Year	Expenditure on YTS £
Orkney	1988-89	336,185
	1989-90	411,223
Shetland	1988-89	312,703
	1989-90	331,355

All Government expenditure on youth training in Orkney and Shetland in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 was incurred by the Training Agency.

Training placement providers are expected to make a contribution to the training managers's costs. The amount of which is negotiated between these two parties. Both training managers and placement providers are also expected to contribute to the cost of training to an extent commensurate with the benefits that they derive from participation in the training process and may incur additional expenditure on training or in payments to trainees. The amount of such additional contributions is a matter for each local authority or business concerned.

The Training Agency expects that local expenditure by it on youth training in Orkney and Shetland in 1990-91 will be respectively £376,336 and £460,795.

Family Planning Services

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of family planning services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* The Government regard family planning services as an important preventive service contributing to better maternal and child health and to the stability of family life and have no plans for altering the provision of them in Scotland. It is for individual health boards to determine, within the resources available to them, the most appropriate pattern of provision of family planning services in their respective areas.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost of general practitioner prescribed hormone replacement therapy treatments in each of the health board areas; and if he will express this cost as a figure per head of the female population aged over 40 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* In the year to 31 December 1989, the cost of the NHS drugs in Scotland dispensed by community pharmacists which are in general prescribed for hormone replacement therapy—British National Formulary sections 6.4.1.1. and 6.4.1.3—was £2,263,000 for 231,000 prescriptions. This represents a cost of £1·85 per head of female population aged over 40.

Corresponding information by health board areas is not available.

Mental Illness

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost per head in each of the health board areas of *(a)* in-patient treatments of mental illness, *(b)* out-patient and day-care treatment of mental illness and *(c)* general practitioner prescribed prescription costs for treatment of stress, anxiety and depression.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* The information for the year ending 31 March 1990 is set out in the table.

Health board	*Weekly cost per head for in-patient treatments of mental illness* £	*Cost per attendance of out-patient and day-care treatment of mental illness* £
Argyll and Clyde	365·97	32·04
Ayrshire and Arran	336·87	16·22
Borders	338·85	30·02
Dumfries and Galloway	413·72	22·61
Fife	370·95	36·07
Forth Valley	302·12	42·13
Grampian	344·44	24·12
Greater Glasgow	336·05	31·17
Highland	372·92	30·08
Lanarkshire	324·59	27·77
Lothian	339·53	30·79
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	375·07	26·95
Western Isles	—	—

There are no separate mental illness hospitals in islands health boards. Patients from these boards are treated on the mainland. Statistics on prescription costs for the treatment of stress, anxiety and depression are not collected centrally.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 18 December 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Investment Funds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Attorney-General whether it is the practice of the Serious Fraud Office to monitor funds offering to guarantee above-market interest rates.

The Attorney-General: No. The role of the Serious Fraud Office is to investigate and prosecute serious and complex fraud. Regulation of investment business is the responsibility of the Securities and Investments Board together with the self-regulating organisations recognised by the Securities and Investments Board in accordance with the Financial Services Act 1986.

King's College (Baby Case)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Attorney-General when the Crown prosecution service received the file on the King's college baby case from Scotland Yard; and when a decision will be taken on prosecution.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service is currently considering a report received from the Metropolitan police on 4 December 1990. That report requires careful consideration and further inquiries may be requested. It is not therefore possible at this stage to give a firm indication of when a decision on whether to institute criminal proceedings will be taken. Once a decision has been taken I will write to the hon. Member informing him of that decision.

ENERGY

Coal Mining Subsidence (Blight)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to introduce legislation to give protection and compensation to householders and landowners whose homes and land are blighted by coal mining subsidence.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government are committed to introducing a Bill to reform the arrangements for repair and compensation where property and land are damaged by coal mining subsidence. This will be done as soon as parliamentary time permits.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to be able to give a regional breakdown of the applications made for shares in each of the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Wakeham: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, if he will provide statistics of what the number of applicant customers on the customer priority application forms is expressed as a percentage of all domestic customers in the franchise area for each of the 12 regional electricity companies of England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Statistics on the numbers of customers applying on customer priority application forms are not available on a basis consistent with statistics on the total number of domestic customers for each regional electricity company.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has called for an analysis of who sold and bought regional electricity company shares on the first day of trading.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department will consider carefully the dealings in the regional electricity company shares during the early aftermarket with a view to applying this knowledge as appropriate to the generator flotation.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give his most up-to-date estimate of the percentage of total share capital allocated to overseas investors in the flotation of the 12 regional electricity companies which have been sold on the United Kingdom stock market in the first 48 hours of trading.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such estimate is available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy who were the lead underwriters for the flotation of the regional electricity companies; and whether they advised on the price of the shares.

Mr. Wakeham: The lead underwriters for the flotation of the regional electricity companies were J. Henry Schroder Wagg and Co. Ltd. which, among others, advised the Government on pricing of the shares.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his total expenditure to date in the current year on electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: Total costs of privatisation will be published in the appropriation accounts once flotations have been completed. Expenditure to the end of March 1990 amounted to £18·7 million and provision has been made for £34·5 million for the current year. Latest forecasts of requirements for 1990-91 will be published as part of the spring supplementary estimates early next year.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to be in a position to state how many applications for shares in one or more regional electricity companies were received from households involving more than one applicant.

Mr. Wakeham: The information will not be available in the form requested.

Unburnt Methane

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the percentage loss to the atmosphere of unburnt methane from *(a)* industrial boilers, *(b)* commercial boilers, *(c)* domestic central heating boilers, *(d)* gas stoves and *(e)* gas fires.

Mr. Moynihan: The percentage leakage of unburnt methane from gas appliances is generally very low, but will depend on both the kind of device and the state of its maintenance.

Work under way for the Department of the Environment at the Warren Spring laboratory to improve the national inventory of emissions includes the assessment of leakage from broad categories of gas usage, but figures for the appliances mentioned are not yet available.

Electricity Supply Industry

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to review the connection between the Office of Electricity Regulation and the Office of Fair Trading in relation to monopoly and competition issues in the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have no such plans. The respective functions of the Director General of Electricity Supply and the Director General of Fair Trading are set out in the legislation; liaison is a matter for the two directors.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what evidence he has of concert parties in the acquisition of shares in *(a)* South Wales Electricity or *(b)* any other of the 12 regional electricity companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department is not aware of any evidence that two or more organisations have acted in concert to acquire shares in any regional electricity company.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the Director General of OFFER regarding stake-building in the 12 regional electricity companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

National Power and PowerGen

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he will announce the price of the shares in National Power and PowerGen; and when trading in those shares will commence.

Mr. Wakeham: The flotation of National Power and PowerGen will take place in February. The precise dates of the offer will be announced closer to the time.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to retain the same advisers for the sale of National Power and PowerGen as advised him on the sale of the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Wakeham: Most of my advisers for the sale of National Power and PowerGen have been appointed for some months. Some of them are the same as for the sale of the regional electricity companies, and some are different.

Regional Electricity Companies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his policy on mergers and takeovers of or among regional electricity companies; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with the 12 regional electricity companies' chairmen regarding mergers and takeovers within the electricity distribution industry;

(3) whether he expects to review the 15 per cent. maximum on individual shareholdings in the 12 regional electricity companies in the next five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's policy with regard to the special share they hold in each of the 12 regional electricity companies is set out in section 1, chapter 1 of the prospectus for the 12 regional electricity companies dated 21 November 1990. Any merger or takeover would in addition be subject to the provisions of the Fair Trading Act 1973.

East Midlands Electricity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about the delay in restoring electricity supplies by East Midlands Electricity.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received representations from a group of hon. Members and have agreed to meet them to discuss their concerns. I understand that the electricity supply situation in the east midlands has substantially improved.

Mr. Robert Malpas

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *251*, whether any restrictions have been placed on Mr. Robert Malpas accepting directorships in companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 30 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *517*.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Financial Services

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to bring forward proposals to give the power to undertake prosecutions for regulatory offences to the Financial Reporting Council; and whether he intends that power of prosecution to be limited to offences committed after the power was granted.

Mr. Redwood: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the power under section 245C of the Companies Act 1985, as inserted by the Companies Act 1989, to authorise a person to apply to the court under section 245B of the 1985 Act for a declaration that the annual accounts of a company do not comply with the requirements of the 1985 Act, and for an order requiring the directors of the company to prepare revised accounts. I expect in the near future to be able to make a statutory instrument designating the Financial Reporting Review Panel Ltd, established under the auspices of the Financial Reporting Council, for those purposes, once satisfied about the matters set out in section 245C(1). If so, the panel will be able to exercise this power only in respect of accounts for years beginning on or after 23 December 1989 as a result of transitional provisions applicable to section 245B of the 1985 Act. Neither the Financial Reporting Council nor its subsidiary bodies expect to prosecute offences under the Companies Act.

Accountancy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last discussed its disciplinary scheme with the institutions representing the accountancy profession.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. Friend has not discussed their disciplinary arrangements with representatives of the accountancy profession. However, before he can recognise supervisory bodies under part II of the Companies Act 1989 he will need to be satisfied that they have adequate arrangements and resources for the effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with their rules, including those relating to the discipline and expulsion of members.

Companies Act 1989

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to commence provisions of the Companies Act 1989.

Mr. Redwood: Yesterday I signed an order which commences certain provisions of the Act. Section 7, in so far as it inserts new section 233(5) into the 1985 Act—approval of defective accounts—and section 12—revision of defective accounts—will commence on 7 January 1991 but will apply with respect to accounts for financial years commencing on or after 23 December 1989. Sections 125 and 127(1), (2) and (4)—delivery of documents to the registrar—will commence on 7 January 1991. Section 135—the power to make regulations on orders imposing restrictions on shares—will come into force on 7 January 1991. Paragraph 10 of schedule 19—removal of restriction on transfer of shares—will commence on 7 January 1991. Sections 108 to 112—company's capacity; ultra vires—and paragraph 11 of schedule 19—protection of company's members against unfair prejudice—will commence on 4 February 1991.

I have placed a copy of the order in the Library.

Deregulation Initiative

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future of the deregulation initiative.

Mr. Redwood: The deregulation initiative serves as a means of ensuring scrutiny of new and existing regulation and the proper assessment of compliance costs for business. Its next phase which I am announcing today focuses on a number of key areas, including some where Government Departments will be targeting attention on certain outdated or burdensome requirements which business has identified as causing difficulty.

In addition the specialist deregulation unit in my Department will support the initiative as a whole by taking the lead on certain general issues, and by continuing to work with business to identify regulatory burdens and to co-operate with departments to achieve good deregulatory outcomes on particular issues.

The new programme of work includes action in the following areas: continuing development and evaluation of disciplines and techniques for counting compliance costs to business and securing good regulatory practice across Whitehall—deregulation unit, DTI; promotion of good regulatory practice in the European Community—deregulation unit, DTI; the administration of rules affecting the workplace, employment conditions, PAYE, national insurance; new integrated guidance for employers and individuals involved in flexible forms of work—Department of Employment; new integrated guidance for the establishment of workplace creches—Department of Employment; review of requirements for annual renewal of exemption certificates for certain NI contributors—Department of Social Security; review scope for eliminating some of the differences in definitions of earnings and expenses for PAYE and NIC purposes—Department of Social Security and Inland Revenue.

The regime for smaller businesses: reduction in reporting requirements for small company accounts—Department of Trade and Industry; examination of scope for new forms of incorporation—Department of Trade and Industry.

The small investor: simplification of requirements for prospectuses—Department of Trade and Industry.

VAT compliance: review of VAT retail schemes with a view to simplifying requirements on business—Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Planning: review of procedures for designating simplified planning zones—Department of the Environment.

Data Protection: reduce the burden of data protection legislation—Home Office.

Specific controls affecting certain types of business: review of selected business licensing requirements—deregulation unit, DTI; review evening opening of betting offices—Home Office; continue to seek ways of simplifying the operation of the Financial Services Act—Department of Trade and Industry; review scope for streamlining the onshore petroleum licensing scheme—Department of Energy; review the system of consents and licenses to work in tidal waters and designated areas of the continental shelf with a view to rationalisation—Department of Transport; develop new safety controls on food producers and retailers in ways which minimise burdens on business—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Department of Health; exempt vehicles from national type approval requirements to permit use on public roads for testing and publicity purposes—Department of Transport; delegate to classification societies the approval of stability information for drilling units and ships which are mobile offshore support units—Department of Transport.

International trade and exports: improve immigration procedures at London airports to facilitate international business travel—Home Office; further streamline export licensing procedures—Department of Trade and Industry; review procedures for issuing E101 certificates for people working abroad—Department of Social Security.

Exports (Iraq)

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what letters there are on the Iraqi contract, now known to be for a gun, between his Department and Sheffield Forgemasters; and if he will list the dates of them.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* There are two letters to my Department from Forgemasters Engineering dated 18 July 1988 and 2 August 1989, and two letters from my Department to Forgemasters Engineering dated 27 July 1988 and 3 November 1989.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assistance was provided by his Department to British companies seeking to supply machine tools and propellants to Iraq in the late 1980s.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* My Department provides assistance to exporters in many ways and Iraq was no different from any other market in this

respect. Assistance from my Department does not, however, relieve exporters of the obligation to comply with export licensing requirements.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice was given by his Department to exporters of sensitive material to Iraq in the late 1980s.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Guidelines on sensitive exports to Iraq were published in October 1985.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Latin America and Asia

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was his Department's response to COM (90) 176 "Guidelines for Co-operation with the Developing Countries in Latin America and Asia".

Mrs. Chalker: We warmly welcome the emphasis in the Asia/Latin America guidelines on help for the poorest countries; on measures for the protection of the environment, including tropical forests; on support for the fight against drugs; and on human rights. The guidelines have been discussed at length—including in two Development Councils—since they were first produced in June 1990. Decisions on the financial package are likely to be taken shortly.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the financial value of development aid from the EC member countries to the Latin America and Asia developing countries (i) in total, (ii) direct financial aid, (iii) technical co-operation and (iv) food aid from 1979 to 1989.

Mrs. Chalker: Total net overseas development assistance to the developing countries of Asia and Latin America through the EC for the years 1979 to 1988, the latest year for which figures are available, is as follows:

	£ million
1979	79·67
1980	83·72
1981	161·89
1982	124·96
1983	130·82
1984	188·77
1985	133·91
1986	156·67
1987	176·62
1988	233·78

The United Kingdom share of this assistance was approximately 20 per cent.

The further breakdown requested by the hon. Member is not published by the European Commission.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for 18 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Sea Birds

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister what proposals Her Majesty's Government have to protect the feeding grounds of breeding sea birds in United Kingdom waters under European Economic Community directive 79/49 on the conservation of wild birds; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government's scientific adviser, the Nature Conservancy Council, is in the process of identifying the most important sea bird and gathering grounds in United Kingdom waters. It has published survey results for the North sea and the west of Britain. The final phase, now under way, will cover the English channel and south-west approaches. The Department of the Environment will consider the most appropriate measures to safeguard these areas when the NCC has completed its studies and has advised the Department accordingly.

Military Hospitals

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to his reply, 10 December, *Official Report*, column *261*, he will publish the number of beds, or bed spaces, at each of the military hospitals referred to.

The Prime Minister: These hospitals are equipped, manned and financed by the United States Government, to whom all inquiries should be directed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions the immigration department has reversed its original decision to refuse entry following representations since the new system commenced; and what percentage of total cases where representations are made this represents.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the total number of overseas voters registered for proxy votes as at the latest available date for the United Kingdom and for each constituency within the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: A total of 1,237 overseas electors are included in the current electoral register, which remains in force until 15 February 1991. A breakdown of this figure by parliamentary constituency is not available. Lists of overseas electors who will be included in the 1991-92 register were published by individual electoral registration officers on 28 November. We shall make the figures known to the House in due course.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons he has visited in England and Wales since his appointment.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have visited Her Majesty's prisons Gloucester and Wandsworth, and Her Majesty's prison and young offender institution Glen Parva. I shall be visiting a young offender institution later this week and have further visits to prison service establishments planned in the new year.

Income Tax Non-payment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners served a sentence in prison as a result of refusal to pay all or part of their income tax in each year from 1980 onwards.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is no longer recorded centrally. Figures for persons received into prison service custody in the years 1980 to 1987 following committal for non-payment of income tax were published in table 6.3 of "Prison statistics England and Wales 1987" —Cm. 547—a copy of which is in the Library.

Durham Prison

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the capacity and the numbers of inmates in Durham prison on 26 November and 18 December.

Mrs. Rumbold: On both dates, the certified normal accommodation and operational capacity of Her Majesty's prison Durham were 651 and 951 respectively. On 26 November, 949 inmates were held. On Monday 17 December, the latest date for which figures are available, 931 inmates were held.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the daily cost of maintaining a prisoner in Durham prison in December 1990.

Mrs. Rumbold: Figures for December 1990 are not yet readily available. A full range of operating cost figures for 1989-90 have been published in appendix 6 of the "Report on the work of the Prison Department April 1989—March 1990"—Cm. 302—a copy of which is available in the Library. These indicate that the daily cost of maintaining a prisoner in Durham prison during that period was £37·14 per day.

Forgery and Counterfeiting

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have been brought under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 in each year; how many cases were successfully prosecuted each year; and how many of such cases were based on the contents of directors' reports and company returns.

Mr. John Patten: The information on the number of prosecutions and convictions is given in the table. We cannot identify from the information held centrally the number of cases which were based on the contents of directors' reports and company returns.

Number of defendants prosecuted and convicted under the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981[1,2]

Year	Prosecutions	Convictions
1981	262	245
1982	2,429	2,424
1983	2,791	2,864
1984	3,482	3,252
1985	3,943	3,817
1986	3,254	3,095
1987	3,109	2,907
1988	3,039	2,660
1989	2,730	2,428

[1] Data also include prosecutions under the Mental Health Act 1983 s126 (1) and (2), and Post Office (Protection) Act 1984 s11 (in part).
[2] The Act came into force on 28 October 1981.

Prison Costs

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average weekly cost to public funds of keeping someone in prison; whether there are major divergences for particular types of prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average weekly operating cost per inmate during 1989-90 was £321. The average cost varied from £218—adult open prisons—to £554—dispersal prisons. Full details of these costs are contained in the 1989-90 report on the work of the prison service, a copy of which is in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 10 December, *Official Report*, column *251*, if he will list the courts comprising the 89 per cent. of justices' clerks from whom responses have been received relating to the number of poll tax liability orders; if he will list the number of orders granted, by the end of September at each of those courts; when the returns are expected from the other 11 per cent. of clerks; and if he will provide a similar overall analysis of liability orders monthly or quarterly, and place such returns in the Library.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is set out in the table, which reflects information provided by justices' clerks since the reply given on 10 December. Returns for the period up to 30 September are expected to be complete by the end of December. Further information is being requested on a quarterly basis and I shall arrange for a copy of complete returns to be placed in the Library as soon as they become available.

Community Charge Enforcement: Number of people against whom liability orders made as at 30 September 1990[1]

		Number
1012	Bath	0
1013	Bristol	0
1019	Weston-Super-Mare	0
1020	Avon North	0
1051	North Bedfordshire	182
1055	Luton	1,621
1066	Forest	75
1072	Slough	0
1075	West Berkshire	4,895
1076	Reading and Sonning	2,006
1114	Burnham	177
1124	Milton Keynes	0

		Number
1125	Aylesbury	2,966
1127	Wycombe	872
1162	Peterborough	7,800
1165	Cambridge	6,102
1173	Chester	749
1178	Macclesfield	5,384
1180	Warrington	6,911
1247	Hartlepool	0
1248	Blangbaurgh East	0
1249	Teesside	85
1272	Penwith	0
1279	Bodmin	55
1280	South East Cornwall	18
1282	Truro and South Powd	51
1364	Carlisle	6,125
1375	Whitehaven	4,075
1380	Barrow with Bootle	544
1382	Kendal and Londsdale	719
1385	Norwich	0
1391	Great Yarmouth	1,855
1392	Kings Lynn	656
1396	Thetford	0
1418	Chesterfield	0
1422	High Peak	0
1423	Ilkeston	0
1427	Derby and South Derbyshire	0
1476	Barnstable	0
1479	Exeter	0
1484	Plymouth	236
1487	Tavistock	0
1490	Torbay	54
1501	Bournemouth	7,105
1505	Poole	4,519
1510	Weymouth and Portland	500
1577	Darlington	0
1578	Derwentside	0
1579	Durham	0
1580	Easington	22
1581	Sedgefield	0
1582	Teesdale and Wear Valley	0
1597	Brighton	0
1599	Eastbourne	756
1601	Hastings	3,065
1602	Hove	1,974
1603	Lewes	0
1610	Billericay	0
1612	Chelmsford	867
1613	Colchester	2,926
1619	Harlow	0
1623	Saffron Walden	0
1624	Southend-on-sea	6
1672	Cheltenham	849
1689	Cirencester, Fairfield, Tetby	0
1692	Gloucester	0
1693	South Gloucestershire	0
1731	Bolton	1,737
1732	Bury	1,714
1733	Manchester	0
1734	Oldham	89
1735	Middleton and Heywood	0
1736	Rochdale	0
1737	Eccles	298
1738	Salford	322
1739	Stockport	0
1740	Ashton-under-Lyne	98
1742	Trafford	609
1743	Leigh	0
1745	Wigan	0
1762	Basingstoke	5,564
1765	Fareham	3,786
1769	Lymington	5,596
1770	Odiham	4,310
1772	Portsmouth	0
1775	Southampton	76
1837	Havering PSA	10
1851	City of Hereford	315
1860	Redditch	3,114
1874	City of Worcester	958
1878	Dacorum	2,754
1883	St. Albans	2,115
1885	Stevenage	2,643
1886	Watford	1,225
1888	Hertford and Ware	4,619
1923	Bainton Beacon	263
1933	Kingston upon Hull	119
1936	Scunthorpe	0
1938	South Hunsley Beacon	0
1940	Grimsby and Cleethorpes	500
1945	Isle of Wight	1,646
1952	Ashford and Tenterden	76
1953	Canterbury and St. Augustin	0
1957	Folkestone and Hythe	125
1959	Maidstone	7
1961	Medway	2,017
1962	Ramsgate	0
1966	Tunbridge Wells and Cranbrook	2,583
1995	Blackburn	0
1996	Blackpool	9,952
1997	Burnley	274
1998	Chorley	262
2002	Lancaster	9,015
2003	Ormskirk	0
2004	Pendle	137
2005	Preston	210
2006	Rossendale	1,126
2009	Wyre	8,457
2039	Leicester (City)	2,712
2040	Leicester (County)	0
2041	Loughborough	0
2043	Market Bosworth	522
2059	Grantham	4,055
2061	Lincoln (City)	3,151
2065	Market Rasen	0
2071	Spilsby and Skegness	1,672
2266	Knowsley	6,240
2267	Liverpool	0
2268	St. Helens	0
2269	North Sefton	2,511
2270	South Sefton	1,816
2271	Wirral	0
2325	Northampton	9,837
2338	Blyth Valley	3,390
2346	Tynedale	1,772
2348	Berwick-upon-Tweed	859
2522	Allertonshire	0
2525	Bulmer East	6,902
2527	Claro	0
2536	Scarborough	5,338
2538	Staincliffe	0
2554	York	0
2566	Mansfield	0
2568	Nottingham	6,952
2631	Guildhall Justice room	0
2641	Bow street	0
2642	Clerkenwell	0
2643	Greenwich	0
2644	Marlborough street	0
2646	Marylebone	0
2648	Old street	0
2649	South Western	1,129
2650	Thames	3,070
2651	Tower Bridge	0
2652	West London (Southcombe street)	0
2653	Woolwich	0
2655	Wells street	0
2656	Camberwell Green	0
2657	West London (Walton street)	0
2660	Horseferry road	0
2663	Highbury Corner	0
2678	Oxford	0
2681	Abingdon	303
2702	North Oxfordshire etc.	0
2706	Sedgemoor	0
2709	Taunton Deane	211
2713	Yeovil	116
2717	East Oxfordshire	235

		Number
2721	Stratford	11
2725	Barnet	83
2727	Bromley PSA	4,890
2728	Bexley	0
2732	Croydon	12,660
2733	Sutton PSA	6,584
2734	Ealing	0
2740	Hampstead	1,022
2742	Haringey PSA	0
2757	Enfield PSA	3,764
2760	Harrow Gore PSA	0
2762	Brent PSA	0
2763	Merton PSA	247
2766	Hillingdon PSA	0
2768	Richmond upon Thames PSA	0
2769	Feltham	25
2770	Barnsley	0
2771	Doncaster	0
2772	Rotherham	0
2773	Sheffield	3,965
2781	Cannock	0
2785	Lichfield	470
2786	Newcastle-under-Lyme	2,133
2790	Stafford	0
2791	Stoke-on-Trent	0
2812	Kingston-upon-Thames	6,261
2813	Waltham Forest PSA	0
2814	Barking	0
2815	Redbridge PSA	477
2822	Lowestoft	897
2830	Ipswich	887
2832	St. Edmundsbury	4,037
2836	Dorking	1,011
2839	Farnham	2,806
2841	Guildford	0
2842	Reigate	389
2843	Staines and Sunbury	6,262
2844	Woking	0
2850	Gateshead	15,738
2851	Newcastle upon Tyne	0
2852	North Tyneside	0
2853	South Tyneside	5,229
2854	Houghton-le-Spring	0
2855	Sunderland	5,991
2896	Nuneaton	246
2903	Mid-Warwickshire	0
2908	Birmingham	204
2909	Sutton Coldfield	2,024
2910	Coventry	13,675
2911	Dudley	2,620
2913	Stourbridge	1,353
2914	Warley	587
2915	West Bromwich	488
2916	Solihull	6,098
2918	Walsall	3,630
2919	Wolverhampton	0
2932	Mid-Sussex	11
2935	Worthing	0
2936	Chichester and District	0
2978	Bradford M.D.	0
2979	Keighley	0
2984	Calder	0
2987	Huddersfield	3,633
2988	Leeds	0
2991	Skyrack and Wetherby	0
2995	Wakefield	194
2996	Batley and Dewsbury	0
3007	Chippenham	3,009
3014	Salisbury	1,563
3015	Swindon	0
3017	Trowbridge	180
3055	Hawarden	0
3057	Rhuddlan	0
3058	Wrexham Maelor	0
3122	Llanelli	159
3135	Gogledd Ceredigion	1,089
3138	Carmarthen South	1,296
3139	Cleddau	0
3201	Bedwellty	0
3202	Cwmbran	504
3205	Newport	337
3220	Ardudwy-Is-Artro	0
3224	Conwy and Llandudno	224
3229	North Anglesey	0
3230	Penllyn	0
3234	Caernarfon and Gwyrfai	0
3263	Lower Rhymney Valley	131
3264	Merthyr Tydfil	0
3265	Miskin	4,061
3266	Newcastle and Ogmore	0
3275	Drayton	55
3279	Shrewsbury	39
3282	Telford	0
3342	Brecon	0
3347	Newtown	0
3348	Cardiff	978
3349	Vale of Glamorgan	2,825
3357	Port Talbot	198
3358	Lliw Valley	1,309
3359	Neath	242
3360	Swansea City	2,107
6635	ILOC (Tower Hamlets etc.)	0
	TOTAL	359,224

[1] Courts listed in alphabetical order within commission areas listed in alphabetical order.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many overseas domestic workers have been deported from the United Kingdom each year since 1980 as a result of leaving the employ of visitors with whom they were originally admitted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not separately identified and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how long a domestic worker must have been in the employ of overseas visitors to the United Kingdom to be admitted as a visitor together with their employer; and what checks are carried out in the employer's country of origin.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under current arrangements there is no minimum qualifying period. Under the new arrangements announced by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ferrers in another place on 24 July at columns 1449-50, which are to take effect shortly, a domestic worker must have been in continuous paid employment with the employer abroad for at least 12 months before accompanying or joining a visitor here. Entry clearance will be required in all cases so that the bona fides of the arrangement can be checked before the domestic worker sets out for the United Kingdom.

Channel 3

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for the balance between the number of large and the number of small independent Channel 3 television companies; what proposals he has regarding the ownership of contiguous franchises; what consultations have taken place recently with the interests involved; when such consultations were initiated; and when they are expected to be concluded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department announced proposals for the content of the supplementary ownership rules to be made under powers in the Broadcasting Act 1990 in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 4 December at columns *85-87*. The draft order, which is subject to affirmative resolution by both Houses of Parliament, will be laid as soon as possible.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policy he announced during the 1989-90 Session of Parliament during proceedings on the Broadcasting Bill in respect of the ownership of contiguous Channel 3 franchises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Ministers indicated during the passage of the Broadcasting Bill that they envisaged that no one person should be allowed to own two large Channel 3 franchises, or two franchises for contiguous areas, except in circumstances where one area had become non-viable and only the adjacent licensee was prepared to take over the area in question. But this was in the context of the underlying policy objectives that the separate regional identities of individual Channel 3 licence areas should be preserved, and that regional programming obligations should be fully discharged. In the light of the strengthening of the regional requirements in the Bill, and of our decision to designate nine of the 15 licence areas as "large" for these purposes, we concluded that it was no longer necessary to provide for an additional restriction on ownership to contiguous licences.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been spent by his Department on public safety campaigns encouraging the use of domestic smoke alarms in each of the last five years; how much money is budgeted for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Home Office first carried out publicity specifically related to smoke alarms in the financial year 1987-88. A breakdown of expenditure for that year and all subsequent years is given in the table.

£ million

Year	*Advertising*	*Other publicity (including print)*	*Total*
1987-88	0·50	0·041	0·541
1988-89	0·55	0·115	0·665
1989-90	1·00	0·091	1·091
[1]1990-91	1·05	0·109	1·159

[1] Estimated.

In 1987, before the Home Office carried out any publicity, research indicated that ownership of domestic smoke alarms in England and Wales was at 6 per cent. Following the national advertising carried out in January 1990, research indicated that ownership had increased to 35 per cent. The Home Office has a target of increasing ownership to 70 per cent. by 1994.

Prison Places

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places are currently provided in Her Majesty's prisons; and what is the total prison population at the latest convenient date.

Mrs. Rumbold: The uncrowded capacity of the prison estate in England and Wales on Friday 14 December 1990 was 44,346, but this figure includes accommodation temporarily taken out of use for refurbishment. The prison population on the same date was 44,911, including 674 prisoners held in police cells.

Trevi Group

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the outcome of the meetings of Trevi and European Community Immigration Ministers in Rome on 6 and 7 December.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The meeting of Trevi Ministers endorsed the good progress made under the Italian presidency in developing further measures to strengthen practical police co-operation, in particular as regards work towards the creation of a European drugs intelligence unit, work on the establishment of a European police information system to help combat the most serious forms of crime, and an initiative to provide joint training to police officers from drug producer and transit countries which has already resulted in a three-week pilot course. We also agreed in principle to the establishment of a permanent secretariat for Trevi, and asked for detailed work on this to be carried out during the Luxembourg presidency.

The meeting of Ministers concerned with immigration was the ninth in the series of meetings held towards the end of each presidency since 1986 and the first which I have myself attended. Ministers had before them a report from senior officials which set out the work undertaken during the Italian presidency.

In particular, we welcomed the progress that had been made on the draft convention on the crossing of the external borders of the member states of the Community and invited the ad hoc group on immigration to complete consideration of the remaining issues. We also invited the ad hoc group to consider what measures are necessary to implement article 8A of the treaty of Rome as regards frontiers. Both my predecessor and I have continued to make clear during the Italian presidency the United Kingdom's profound reservation as to the complete abolition of immigration controls at internal Community borders. We shall, however, participate actively in the study of measures for the implementation of article 8A.

Ministers also discussed the question of migration from central and eastern Europe in readiness for the Council of Europe ministerial conference to be held in Vienna in January 1991.

Prisoners (Underpants)

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many changes of underpants male prisoners are given each week; and whether there are any plans to increase this.

Mrs. Rumbold: Current issue scales allow for a minimum of two changes of underpants each week.

Following a review of the range and style of prison clothing, this is being increased to a minimum of four changes a week through a phased programme between January and the end of 1991. The first inmates to benefit will be those in establishments in Kent and the north-east.

Human Rights (European Bodies)

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Her Majesty's Government intend to renew their acceptance of the right of individual petition to the European Commission of Human Rights and of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have decided to renew for a period of five years from 14 January 1991 our acceptance of the right of individual petition to the European Commission of Human Rights and of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

Suicide Prevention

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has given consideration to the development programmes involving voluntary organisations such as the Samaritans in suicide prevention schemes.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

The Department has grant-aided the Samaritans for several years. The grant in the current year is £155,000; we therefore know and support their valuable work in assisting those considering suicide.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received urging him to exempt from value added tax the provision of home care goods and services.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government have received a number of representations on this matter, but, owing to the constraints of EC VAT law, are unable to exempt domiciliary care unless it is provided by a charity or public body.

Income Tax

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will seek to make special arrangements for those returning United Kingdom hostages and refugees from Kuwait and Iraq whose expected entitlement to income tax exemptions has been lost because they have been obliged to return to the United Kingdom early.

Mr. Maude: I am considering this matter carefully in the light of information about the particular circumstances of those affected by the Gulf crisis.

Oral Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what savings his Department would make were no notice given of oral questions to Ministers and they were answered without civil service time being used on briefings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No savings would be made and costs would almost certainly increase significantly. If the oral question is known in advance briefing can be tightly focused, thus avoiding the cost of producing a detailed brief, covering all subjects that could possibly arise.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average length of time taken and the average cost involved of officials' time in his Department preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The time taken in preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions is not routinely recorded in Her Majesty's Treasury. Estimates are, however, made where there is a likelihood of exceeding the disproportionate cost threshold (currently £250). However, following an interdepartmental exercise in 1972 in which the Treasury participated an assessment was made of the average cost throughout all Departments of answering an oral question. This assessment was based on staff time, using average rates of pay and associated costs for the grades concerned, together with a share of the cost of parliamentary sections and any substantial non-staff costs such as computer usage. This assessed figure is regularly updated and currently stands at £99.

London Weighting

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) for what reasons London weighting for civil servants has not been altered for the last two years;

(2) whether he intends to increase London weighting for civil servants;

(3) whether the civil servants' claim for additional London weighting will be submitted for independent arbitration;

(4) whether it is his intention to end London weighting payments to civil servants.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's general policy is that pay should be based on what is required to recruit, retain and motivate within what is affordable. Over the past two years, over £87 million has been spent enhancing London pay, in addition to national pay increases. This represents an increase of over 50 per cent. in the London element of the pay bill. The money has been spent on special London pay points for most civil servants in the capital and on local pay additions which focus on particular locations experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties. Unlike London weighting, both are targeted to ensure that public money is used most cost-effectively. Over the past two years, recruitment and retention rates in London have improved very significantly.

Against this background, there was no justification for an additional across-the-board increase in London weighting in either 1989 or 1990. The Government's intention is to continue the policy of setting London pay in accordance with what is required to recruit, retain and motivate and, where appropriate, to target increases in the London element of pay to ensure that they produce the best value for money for the taxpayer. There are no plans to end London weighting.

I have agreed to meet the Council of Civil Service Unions in the new year to discuss its request for arbitration on its 1990 London weighting claim.

House Owners (Relief)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show *(a)* the quantities of relief during 1989-90 that was accounted for by house owners who in that year did not either move or enter the tenure and *(b)* the quantum of relief provided to 1989-90 first-time purchasers during that year.

Mr. Maude: This information is not available.

National Savings

Mr. Hind: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any proposals to make about the method of calculating repayments of National Savings products.

Mr. Maples: National Savings practice is to date repayments at the expected date of receipt by customers. This has also been the date used for valuing the amounts to be repaid or for other rights, such as participation in premium bond prize draws. In this way customers benefit from their savings until the date they are expected to receive their money.

National Savings has now received new legal advice on the regulations governing savings certificates, premium bonds and the National Savings bank ordinary account. This is that repayments should be determined at the date of posting, not the date of receipt.

For premium bonds, National Savings has therefore changed its administrative practice to fit with the regulations without any disadvantage to customers.

For savings certificates and ordinary account, if National Savings had valued the repayment warrants at the date they were posted rather than the expected date of receipt, many customers would have been deprived of their final increments, bonuses and other benefits. These additional payments for savings certificates are estimated at £300 million—this is not a precise figure as over 70 years of transactions are involved. National Savings will not be seeking to recover any of the payments made to customers as the amounts paid to them were in accordance with long-standing practice and customers' expectations.

The Government intend to seek parliamentary authority in the next Finance Bill to validate the payments that have been made out of the national loans fund, the Consolidated Fund and the National Savings bank ordinary deposits. Meanwhile payments in accordance with current practice—which is to the benefit of savers —will continue to be made pending the necessary provisions in the Finance Bill.

For the future, National Savings intends to continue the practice which has meant that customers receive payment as near as possible to the date they expect it. National Savings is considering with its legal advisers what consequential changes should be made to the relevant regulations. Amending regulations will be laid as soon as practicable.

A small number of past customers have legal entitlements to additional payments. First, some customers who had their index-linked certificates repaid at a time that was affected by a fall in the RPI would have received a larger payment, averaging £1·50, if the certificates had been valued at the date of posting. National Savings is sending the extra payments with interest to compensate for delay to all the holders concerned.

Secondly, some premium bond holders become entitled to an increased prize, or a new prize. This is because under the new legal interpretation of the regulations, some winning bonds were ineligible for inclusion in the relevant prize draws as they should have been treated as having been repaid earlier. National Savings is writing to all new premium bond prize winners. They will be paid their prizes plus compensation for the delay.

The additional amount now to be paid out in premium bond prizes and to holders of index-linked certificates, together with compensation for these late payments, is estimated at £300,000. This will not add to planned public expenditure. National Savings is issuing a press release today giving further details of its current practice and of the consequences of the new legal advice. I have placed copies in the Library.

Third-world Countries

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in pursuing, with other members of the Paris Club, the proposals made by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer on 19 September to improve concessions made to third-world countries and the Toronto terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* The United Kingdom's Trinidad proposals are currently being discussed by the members of the Paris Club as part of a general review of the treatment of the poorest, highly indebted countries. Naturally, other creditors have ideas of their own, many of which would be complementary to the United Kingdom proposals. It is too early to say what the result of the review will be. However, we remain confident that a new package incorporating many of the important features of the Trinidad terms will be agreed during 1991.

Poland

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current economic balance between the United Kingdom and Poland; and if he has any proposals to alleviate the burden of debt upon Poland.

Mr. Maples *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* United Kingdom exports to Poland in 1990 H1 were $142 million. United Kingdom imports from Poland during 1990 H1 were $310 million. The Paris Club of official bilateral creditors is currently working with the Polish authorities in order to find a long-term solution to the Polish debt problem. United Kingdom officials are taking an active and constructive role in these discussions.

ENVIRONMENT

Homelessness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for discontinuation of the leasing by borough or district councils of private houses for temporary accommodation for homeless persons; what consultation he has had with boroughs principally affected; and what study he has made concerning the effects of implementing his proposal.

Mr. Yeo: On 22 October 1990, the Department consulted all local housing authorities about proposals for

housing revenue account subsidy in 1991-92. There was no proposal to discontinue leasing. We are now considering the responses received as a result of our consultations and final decisions will be made shortly.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has for action in relation to homeless single people in London, additional to that announced in his reply of 22 June, *Official Report*, column 752.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to the reply, 26 November 1990, c. 256-57]:* I am announcing today that I have given the go-ahead for 1,000 new bedspaces in hostel and long-term accommodation under the single homelessness initiative to tackle rough sleeping in central London. The new hostel spaces will be run by front-line voluntary groups.

We are working on this high priority task in close co-operation with voluntary organisations. I am delighted that Nick Hardwick, director of Centrepoint, Soho, is to be working closely on this project with me. Together we will be developing strategies to ensure particularly that people sleeping in concentrations such as those in London's Bullring and Victoria will make use of the hostels that are available to them.

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department had, before announcing proposals to reduce the 100 per cent. subsidy for leasing housing from private landlords, on the likely increase in the number of families in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in *(a)* London and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Yeo: It is for local authorities to decide what type of temporary accommodation to use to meet their homelessness duties. Local authorities report to my Department on a quarterly basis the number of homeless households they have placed in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. As there is considerable variation between areas in the use made of such accommodation, my Department does not make forecasts of likely future usage.

National Parks (Fencing)

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any intention to amend planning regulations to restrict high fencing in national park areas.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the restrictions on the natural movements of deer in the area of Bury hill, near Dulverton, caused by the erection of a high deer-proof fence; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that the fence in question has been erected on one boundary of Barlynch wood under the provisions of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. I understand that it does not prevent access by other routes. I do not propose to intervene.

Office of Water Services

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of staff employed by the Office of Water Services; what are their terms of reference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Water Act 1989 established the Office of Water Services as an independent Government Department under the Director General of Water Services, who was appointed by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State for Wales. Its main tasks are to enforce the new system of economic regulation of the industry and to protect the interests of customers. Its organisation and staffing are matters for the director general. An account of its initial period of operation was given in the director general's annual report which was laid before the House on 19 June and a copy of which is in the Library.

Derelict Land Grant

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to approve derelict land grant for the purposes of desilting Lymm dam in Cheshire.

Mr. Yeo: No. The dam in its present state is attractive, open to public access and provides a natural habitat. Desilting it cannot be regarded as high in regional priorities.

Water Companies (Charging)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, if he will set out the statutory requirements there are on water companies to take cognisance of the outcome of the consultation currently being undertaken by the Director General of Water Services on methods of charging.

Mr. Baldry: The Water Act 1989 contains a prohibition on charging by rateable values which will not take effect until the year 2000. Otherwise it is for each company to decide what method to adopt, subject to the obligations placed on it in its instrument of appointment, in particular the avoidance of undue discrimination against and undue preference for any class of customers or potential customers. I understand that the Director General of Water Services hopes to produce from the consultation process which he has initiated some guidelines and criteria which will help the water companies to formulate their future charging policies.

Integrated Pollution Control

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is making to ensure proper liaison between the various regulatory bodies involved in the control of those processes covered by integrated pollution control.

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the division of responsibility between Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the National Rivers Authority for the sampling of industrial discharges has been settled without diminution of the National Rivers Authority's legislative rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has recently signed two memoranda of understanding, one with the Health and Safety Executive and the other with the National Rivers Authority.

These memoranda are designed to ensure effective co-ordination of the regulation of plant subject to control under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. The memorandum with the Health and Safety Executive is concerned with the interface between the two organisations in respect of discharges, primarily those to air, and issues arising from the protection of persons at work and the public under the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The memorandum with the National Rivers Authority deals with issues relating to discharges to water.

Copies of both memoranda have been placed in the Library of the House.

River Severn (Sewage Treatment)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by water authority, the sewage treatment works which are allowed by derogation, to discharge raw sewage or partly treated sewage in the River Severn and its tributaries.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Effluent discharges from sewage treatment works operated by the water service companies are subject to control by the National Rivers Authority under the provisions of the Water Act 1989. There are no derogations from these controls. Particulars of consents granted for discharges into the River Severn, its tributaries and the Severn estuary are entered on the public registers which are available for inspection at the relevant regional offices of the National Rivers Authority.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant he has approved in connection with the improvement of permanent traveller caravan sites in Bradford; and how many additional pitches are to be provided under the improvement plans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Phase I improvements for the Mary street site in Bradford were given approval in February 1988 in the sum of £183,449. The works were to improve the existing site and to provide eight new pitches. They have now been completed.

Phase II and III improvements to the same site were approved in October 1990 in the sum of £643,506. These works will produce further site improvements and an additional four new pitches, bringing the total pitches on this site to 28.

I understand that Bradford city council will also shortly be submitting an application for improvements to the Esholt lane site at Baildon.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances he can withdraw designation agreed under the caravans Act; in what circumstances a local authority granted designation can request him to withdraw or rescind designation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* The Secretary of State may designate a local authority under the Caravan Sites Act 1968 when he considers that adequate sites for gipsies are provided in its area, or that it is not necessary or expedient to make such provision. He may revoke the designation order, by further order, either on the formal application of the authority which made the original application, or without such an application.

It is open to anybody to seek to persuade the Secretary of State that the circumstances in which the designation order was made are no longer applicable, and that the order should thus be revoked.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information has been supplied to his Department about the extent of permanent caravan site provision for travellers established or planned by each local authority in Yorkshire and Humberside; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* From the information supplied annually to my Department by local authorities, the extent of permanent caravan site provision for travellers by local authorities in Yorkshire and Humberside is as follows:

Authority and site	*Number of pitches*
Humberside	
Beverley (Harland Way, Cottingham)	26
Kingston-upon-Hull (Bedford Street, Wilmington)	24
North Yorkshire	
Richmondshire (Limekiln Wood, Catterick)	14
Ryedale (Clifton)	20
Ryedale (Malton)	14
Ryedale (Osbaldwick)	12
Selby (Burn)	12
Selby (Carlton)	12
Hambleton (Seamer)	16
Former County of South Yorkshire	
Barnsley (Smithies Lane)	20
Doncaster (Armthorpe)	20
Doncaster (Black Bank, Doncaster Carr)	[1][2]46
Doncaster (Nursery Lane, Sprotbrough)	[1]14
Rotherham (North Anston)	16
Sheffield (Broad Oaks)	[1]12
Sheffield (Holbrook Industrial Estate)	[1]15
Sheffield (Redmires)	16
Sheffield (Tinsley Park Road)	[1]10
Former County of West Yorkshire	
Bradford (Birkshall Lane/Bowling Back Lane)	24
Bradford (Esholt Lane, Baildon)	16
Leeds (Cottingley Springs 'A')	20
Leeds (Cottingley Springs 'B')	36
Wakefield (Heath Caravan Park, Doncaster Road)	[3]29

[1]Indicates temporary site.
[2]6 transit.
[3]22 transit.

The following authorities also have schemes for refurbishment of existing sites or the development of new sites at some stage of the grant application process:

City of Bradford Metropolitan Council
Humberside County Council
North Yorkshire County Council
City of Sheffield Metropolitan District Council
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

In addition, officers of the Department have had discussions with the following authorities where further gipsy site proposals are at an early stage:

Metropolitan Borough of Calderdale
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Leeds City Council
City of Sheffield Metropolitan Council

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with representatives of organisations concerning the designation of Bradford under the caravans Act; what discussions he intends holding to discuss this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Bradford metropolitan district was designated under section 12 of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, with effect from 30 May 1990. I have not held discussions subsequently with any organisations concerning this designation and have no plans to do so.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gold (Iraq and Kuwait)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the amount of gold held by financial institutions in Iraq on 2 August and of the amount which now remains in Kuwait or Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Iraqi economy has been on a war footing for nearly a decade, and very little authoritative information has been disclosed. No useful estimate can therefore be made.

Financial Assets (Kuwait)

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the liquid assets which have been removed from Kuwait since the Iraqi invasion.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Until the illegal occupation of Kuwait is terminated and the legitimate Government restored we have no basis on which to make meaningful estimates.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the value of the Kuwaiti currency currently blocked.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is not possible to give a precise estimate of the value of Kuwaiti currency currently blocked by sanctions.

Entry Clearance Officers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by how many the number of entry clearance officers at the post in Bangladesh has been reduced in the past year, to date; what further plans there are to reduce the number of entry clearance officers; what effect the reductions in staff will have in applicant waiting times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: During 1990 the post at Dhaka has been reduced by five entry clearance officers of whom four were redeployed to other Indian sub-continent posts where queues were longer. Staffing levels are kept under continual review. The staff savings were achieved through increased productivity which had reduced applicant waiting times. These are now expected to remain roughly constant at the following levels:

Queue	*Months*
1	2
2	3
3	3
4	9

Settlement queues are organised as follows:

(Q1) Persons with a claim to the right of abode, dependent relatives over 70 years, special compassionate cases.
(Q2) All spouses; all children under 18 years.
(Q3) Fiance(e)s and others applying for first time settlement.
(Q4) Re-applicants.

Romanian Orphans

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will issue instructions to the entry clearance section in the British embassy in Bucharest to expedite the documentation required by prospective adoptive parents of Romanian orphans so that their entry clearance certificates may be issued before 19 December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British embassy in Bucharest processes entry clearance applications relating to the adoption of Romanian children as quickly as possible. There is no scope for expediting the process further. In any case, prospective adopters should not be unduly delayed by the holiday season, since we understand that the Romanian courts will close only on 24 and 25 December and 1 and 2 January.

Middle East

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east as between Israel and its Arab neighbouring states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The cycle of violence in Israel and the occupied territories demonstrates how important it is to retain a process which will bring peace between Israel and her neighbours, including the Palestinians. This is unfinished business to which we shall have to return once the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait has been reversed.

Rights of the Child Convention

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government propose to ratify the UN convention on the rights of the child; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom signed the UN convention on the rights of the child on 19 April 1990. We intend to ratify the convention as soon as possible.

British Embassy, Bucharest

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will review the decision to close the British embassy in Bucharest from 15 December to 11 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There has been no such decision. During the period in question, the British embassy in Bucharest will close only on 24, 25 and 26 December and 1 January, apart from weekends. The visa section is normally closed to the public every Thursday.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what form of application to British posts overseas is made by employers of domestic servants desirous of visiting the United Kingdom together with those servants; and what details they are required to give of their domestic servants.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under present arrangements, unless the domestic servant, who must be aged 16 or over, is a visa national, an application to a British visa-issuing post overseas is not required for a visit to the United Kingdom. Visa nationals are required to obtain the appropriate visa at a British visa-issuing post. In such cases, the domestic servant is required to produce documentary evidence from the employer confirming that the servant is already in the service of the employer abroad, and that adequate support and accommodation will be provided in the United Kingdom.

THE ARTS

G. B. Shaw Estate

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what is the total sum that has accrued to the British museum from the G. B. Shaw estate;

(2) whether he will publish a table showing how much money has accrued to the British museum from the G. B. Shaw estate in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Renton: These are matters for the trustees of the British museum.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science and Engineering Research Council

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many individual members of the staff of the Science and Engineering Research Council were given merit awards during the 1989-90 financial year;

(2) what was the total value of merit awards given to individual members of staff of the Science and Engineering Research Council during 1989-90.

Mr. Alan Howarth: A total of 150 merit awards were made to members of staff of the Science and Engineering Research Council during the financial year 1989-90; the total value of these awards was £41,220.

Wilmington Grammar School

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to issue his decision on the grant-maintained status application made by the Wilmington grammar school for boys; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering his decision. Section 73 (4)(b) of the Education Reform Act requires this proposal and the section 12 proposals published by Kent education authority on 13 June to close this school and the Wilmington high school, and the section 13 proposal published simultaneously by the Rochester Church of England diocesan board of education to establish a new voluntary aided school in the premises, to be considered together. He will inform the governors, the education authority and the diocese of his decision shortly.

Support and Training Grants

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocations will be made to local education authorities under the grants for education support and training programme for 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department is today writing to all local education authorities in England to inform them of the level of expenditure which I have approved for support in the grants for education support and training programme for 1991-92. The programme will support total expenditure of some £364 million in 1991-92. The programme is summarised in the table.

I am placing in the Library a more detailed table setting out allocations to individual local education authorities in each activity.

Expenditure to be supported in the 1991-92 GEST programme

	£ million
School management	71·9
Teacher information	0·8
Teacher appraisal[1]	10·0
College management	3·4
NC assessment	35·0
IT in schools	23·3
National Curriculum	85·7
LEA inspectors/advisers	1·2
Teacher recruitment	7·7
Licensed teachers	5·5
Under 5s	4·8
Health education	7·3
Pupil behaviour	1·8
Training for SEN	5·5
SEN in ordinary schools	1·0
SEN in FE	0·9
PICKUP	2·1
IT in FE	1·1
National Vocational qualifications	2·1
Ethnic diversity in FE	0·9
Workers Educational Association	1·2
Adult literacy	0·7
Youth and community workers	1·2
Management of training	19·9
Activities being handled separately	
Articled teachers	8·0
Educational Psychologists	2·6
Committed expenditure	
From ESG projects begun in 1990-91 and earlier years:	58·0
TOTAL	363·6

[1] Indicative allocation, to be confirmed subject to satisfactory bids.

Teacher Training

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the intake of teacher training courses in England and Wales in 1989-90; and what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the numbers to provide for the needs of primary and secondary schools and institutions of further education in the years after 1993.

Mr. Fallon *[pursuant to his reply, 14 November 1990, c. 152]:* My right hon. and learned Friend is today publishing the technical document describing our projections of school teacher demand and supply. A copy has been placed in the Library. It will contribute to a more informed debate about teacher supply by setting out the basis of our projections, and providing a range of projections as illustration. This will assist those who wish to produce their own projections and to form a view about ours. The document also responds to the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee which asked for a clearer statement of the Department's projection methodology.

TRANSPORT

Taxi Passengers (Accidents)

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what figures he has for the past 10 years of the number of people killed or seriously injured whilst travelling by taxi.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the table. The number of taxis registered is also shown. The only available figures for both accidents and vehicle registrations relate to purpose-built taxis.

Taxi Occupants Killed or Seriously Injured: Great Britain: 1980 to 1989.

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Taxi Occupants:										
Drivers:										
Killed	8	2	3	5	5	3	1	8	4	5
Seriously injured	63	63	67	64	72	70	95	84	96	87
All KSI	71	65	70	69	77	73	96	92	100	92
Passengers:										
Killed	3	5	6	1	6	7	3	3	6	3
Seriously injured	102	99	109	117	120	89	115	138	135	144
All KSI	105	104	115	118	126	96	118	141	141	147
All occupants KSI	176	169	185	187	203	169	214	233	241	239
Taxi population[1]	—	—	—	23,547	24,784	25,383	26,310	27,552	29,181	30,249

[1] Figures were not collected before 1983.

Traffic (London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will prepare and place in the Library a map showing the principal locations of traffic lock or congestion in London for the year 1989 or other convenient period, indicating for each the principal causes of such conditions.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to my Department's report "Traffic Speeds on London Roads", published in November 1989, which shows speeds on the strategic network in London, and to the reports of stage 1 of the London assessment studies published in December 1986 which identified problems on the road network in the study areas and their causes. I am placing in the Library a map showing the location of congestion on the trunk road network identified by the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the range of passenger car units per hour per lane currently flowing on routes in London likely to be designated as red routes; and the range of respective increase in flow he expects after their designation.

Mr. Chope: Traffic flows vary very widely, depending on the characteristics of the road and the time of day. It is therefore not possible to provide meaningful figures in this form. An objective is to encourage traffic to use the priority routes rather than unsuitable residential roads. We shall be monitoring the pilot scheme to observe the effects on traffic flows through the area.

Clearways (London)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a map showing the clearways in London on which there are existing parking or waiting restrictions originally introduced by the Greater London council in co-operation with London borough councils.

Mr. Chope: Clearways in London were introduced by the Minister of Transport in 1961 under the London (Prohibition of Waiting) (Clearways) Order SI No. 1401. There have been a number of subsequent amendments. These specify the locations in great detail and I am investigating whether a convenient summary map can be produced.

Coach and Rail Services

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any estimates are available of the number of long-distance passengers carried by *(a)* coach and *(b)* rail services from 1980 to 1990.

Mr. Freeman: Information required is not available in the form requested, but the following data from the national travel survey provide an assessment of comparable journeys greater than 25 miles in length.

Passenger journeys per year

(millions)

	Coach	*Rail*
1978-79	50	190
1985-86	70	200

Information from this source for 1989-90 will be available in mid-1992.

Pedestrians

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the number of pedestrians killed in Great Britain, for the years 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Chope: Comprehensive information on pedestrian fatalities is not available. However, information is available on those killed in road accidents and is summarised in the table.

Pedestrian deaths: Great Britain: 1986 to 1989

Year	Deaths
1986	1,841
1987	1,703
1988	1,753
1989	1,706

Pedestrian casualty figures for 1990 are not yet available.

Drivers (Health)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what medical advice is available to him on the health of drivers and motor cycle riders and on those in charge of the various forms of public transport for which he is responsible.

Mr. Chope: All drivers are required by law to notify DVLA, Swansea, of any relevant health condition when they apply for a driving licence, or if a condition develops or worsens during the currency of a licence. In addition public service vehicle drivers are required to submit a full medical report on first application for their vocational licence and at five-yearly intervals from age 46.

Car Phones

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gloucester on 11 December, *Official Report*, column *344*, what new information he has concerning the safety implications of the use of hand-held car telephones in moving vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: None.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gloucester on 11 December, *Official Report*, column *344*, what views were expressed at his meeting with the Association of Chief Police Officers by the Association of Chief Police Officers concerning the safety implications of using hand-held car telephones in moving vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Association of Chief Police Officers expressed the view that existing powers are sufficient to deal with this problem.

A33

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport following two recent accidents on the A33, if he has any plans to speed up the completion date for the upgrading of this road to motorway standards.

Mr. Chope: No, the contract completion date for the widening of the Compton to Bassett section of the A33 trunk road is October 1991. We have however taken steps to provide additional coning, flashing lights and warning signs through the site of the works.

WALES

Morriston Hospital, Swansea

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what bed complement is planned for the new burns and plastic surgery unit at Morriston hospital, Swansea.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The bed complement planned for the new burns, plastic and maxillofacial surgery unit at Morriston hospital is 122.

Treatment Centres

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list against the name of each of the centres established in Wales as part of his Department's treatment centres initiative *(a)* the number of patients treated in each calendar month since the centre started work and *(b)* the number of patients within each calendar month's total, broken down to show how many came from each district health authority district in Wales and how many of those treated were from outside Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information showing the numbers treated at the treatment centres including those Welsh residents transferred from English lists is as follows:

Orthopaedic Treatment Centre, Rhydlafar

	December 1989	January 1990	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
East Dyfed	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	1	3	—
Gwent	—	2	4	2	4	5	3	1	2	6	7	3
Mid Glamorgan	1	8	6	4	13	5	6	2	4	4	4	—
Powys	1	—	—	—	—	2	3	2	3	7	5	3
South Glamorgan	5	21	29	6	12	3	6	3	5	1	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	3	3	5	2	1	6	7	18	9	3	5
England	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	8	34	42	17	31	17	25	17	32	28	23	11

Ophthalmic Treatment Centre, Bangor

	July 1990	August	September	October	November
Gwent	—	—	—	—	1
Gwynedd	52		40	40	34
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	1
Powys	—	—	—	—	3

	July 1990	August	September	October	November
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	1
Total	52		40	40	40

Surgical Treatment Centre, Bridgend

	April 1990	May	June	July	August	September	October	November
East Dyfed	2	6	4	9	3	11	11	10
Gwent	1	—	—	2	2	—	2	6
Mid Glamorgan	38	22	19	24	27	20	30	38
Powys	—	3	2	2	2	—	2	—
South Glamorgan	3	3	3	6	6	7	7	9
West Glamorgan	1	1	2	5	3	6	9	24
England	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Total	45	35	30	48	43	44	62	87

Valleys Initiative

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will assess the impact on the unemployment figures of the valleys initiative in each of the areas covered by the initiative since the scheme started.

Mr. David Hunt: The unemployment rate in the whole of the area covered by the programme for the valleys has fallen by 4·1 per cent. since June 1988. This compares with a fall of 3·2 per cent. in Wales and 2·2 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Land Reclamation

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the annual rate of land reclamation in the valleys of south Wales since 1979 with the amount of money spent on land reclamation in south Wales each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to the hon. Lady and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money has been spent by his Department on public safety campaigns encouraging the use of domestic smoke alarms in each of the last five years; how much is budgeted for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None. The Home Office is responsible for fire safety publicity in Wales.

Urban Programme Grant

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the annual urban programme grant for Wales for each year since the scheme started, giving the percentage increase or decrease each year and the rate of inflation for each of the corresponding years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested is contained in the table for 1975-76 onwards. Information relating to earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Year	UP allocation Wales £ million[1]	Percentage change over previous year	Percentage increase in GDP deflator
1975-76	2·91	—	—
1976-77	3·29	+13·06	13·54
1977-78	3·85	+17·02	13·69
1978-79	5·50	+42·86	10·88
1979-80	7·10	+29·09	16·68
1980-81	9·10	+28·17	18·33
1981-82	10·90	+19·78	9·65
1982-83	18·60	+70·64	7·10
1983-84	17·70	−4·84	4·62
1984-85	22·10	+24·86	5·08
1985-86	19·20	−13·12	5·45
1986-87	23·70	+23·44	3·42
1987-88	23·10	−2·53	5·45
1988-89	24·60	+6·49	7·30
1989-90	27·60	+12·20	6·37
1990-91	32·50	+17·75	8·00
1991-92	34·00	+4·62	6·00

[1] Allocation represents the level of expenditure approved, made up of 75 per cent. grant and 25 per cent. local authority contribution.

SCOTLAND

Car Ownership

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the estimated number of households with a car in *(a)* Falkirk district, *(b)* Stirling district and *(c)* Clackmannan district, and express these figures as a percentage of all households in each district.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information available is from the 1981 census of population and is shown in the table:

District	Households with at least one car available	
	Number	Percentage of all households
Falkirk	27,525	54·6
Stirling	16,585	61·5
Clackmannan	9,626	58·3

Births (Central Region)

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list, for each of the past 10 years, the number of births by postal code of the residence of the mother for each postal code area in Central region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Births by postcode sector of usual residence of mother, Central Region, 1980 to 1989

Postcode sector	Year 1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
FK1 1	16	20	16	17	14	21	25	22	17	18
FK1 2	149	142	142	111	109	115	105	108	118	98
FK1 3	30	23	27	30	23	29	25	33	37	25
FK1 4	129	119	110	115	77	116	97	101	99	119
FK1 5	63	54	60	50	70	59	58	50	56	52
FK2 0	203	181	176	184	179	179	154	189	162	158
FK2 7	107	127	113	147	127	127	133	157	147	141
FK2 8	85	80	72	93	84	90	70	106	97	59
FK2 9	129	111	114	130	107	127	105	110	104	100
FK3 0	109	116	116	126	125	117	92	127	108	107
FK3 8	69	62	60	71	71	74	70	73	72	66
FK3 9	80	69	73	66	47	75	61	62	64	62
FK4 1	131	122	142	111	127	135	128	95	126	98
FK4 2	39	42	45	29	32	32	26	27	18	34
FK5 3	64	59	54	59	54	73	60	45	50	47
FK5 4	137	122	121	115	141	127	138	136	122	122
FK6 5	145	125	113	126	114	107	106	101	112	117
FK6 6	83	87	68	65	67	57	61	69	63	62
FK7 0	68	58	59	54	59	52	55	60	54	63
FK7 7	141	125	136	128	131	136	120	147	128	121
FK7 8	54	37	45	43	54	68	50	84	52	73
FK7 9	109	98	117	107	121	96	82	110	88	94
FK8 1	157	158	149	137	127	145	129	149	137	123
FK8 2	36	30	22	24	22	21	27	25	30	21
FK8 3	46	47	52	50	58	50	53	44	53	52
FK9 4	50	54	40	49	58	50	45	64	52	57
FK9 5	63	74	71	75	56	68	69	60	83	67
FK10 1	89	93	107	79	70	103	78	89	90	80
FK10 2	180	223	157	173	186	194	210	191	215	165
FK10 3	103	109	115	112	105	97	107	106	102	107
FK10 4	44	54	51	42	45	53	50	37	50	36
FK11 7	50	14	29	30	29	23	20	25	21	13
FK12 5	84	71	65	49	78	55	57	72	62	57
FK13 6	93	87	94	88	81	85	83	91	97	84
FK14 7	30	23	29	19	24	30	26	19	33	15
FK15 0	39	46	35	38	27	33	25	37	35	34
FK15 9	33	62	48	44	48	46	50	62	52	40
FK16 6	14	13	24	19	20	21	23	23	20	25
FK17 8	40	24	39	29	32	25	32	25	20	34
FK18 8	—	3	2	1	1	3	—	2	—	2
FK19 8	3	6	8	2	3	2	4	3	3	6
FK20 8	2	5	6	10	2	3	5	2	5	2
FK21 6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
FK21 8	9	4	6	19	7	8	7	6	13	9
G62 8	1	—	—	3	1	1	4	2	—	3
G63 0	36	34	42	34	31	31	43	39	36	50
G63 9	69	61	39	46	40	52	49	38	53	50
G67 3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
G68 0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
G83 7	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
G83	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
G83 9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
EH49 6	13	13	12	10	11	11	12	14	11	6
EH49 7	5	5	6	7	4	6	1	10	3	4
EH51 0	108	119	81	97	70	86	72	62	63	77
EH51 9	96	109	88	72	89	100	80	90	97	85
KY13 7	—	5	—	1	9	3	1	3	2	2
Other Postcodes	15	13	10	24	10	14	18	16	14	7
TOTAL	3,648	3,538	3,407	3,360	3,277	3,431	3,201	3,418	3,346	3,150

Note: The births included in the table are those which occurred anywhere in Scotland to mothers resident in Central region and those few (shown against "other postcodes") which occurred in Central region to mothers resident outside Scotland.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been spent by his Department on public safety campaigns encouraging the use of domestic smoke alarms in each of the last five years; how much money is budgeted for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Home and Health Department has spent the following amounts in connection with these campaigns:

	£
1987-88	7,500
1988-89	89,000
1989-90	51,000
[1]1990-91	84,000

[1] Estimate.

The Department will continue to encourage the installation of domestic smoke alarms in Scotland through media advertising and the provision of publicity material to the eight Scottish fire brigades for their local campaigns.

Sandeels

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department has yet received sufficient data to give a reliable estimate on the recruitment level of sandeels in Shetland waters in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The results of the most recent assessment carried out by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries marine laboratory, Aberdeen indicate the size of the 1989 year class of sandeels as 25,327 million. This is regarded as being approximately average abundance. This provisional scientific assessment and related advice is being studied closely. We will consult fishery and other interests very shortly regarding 1991 management arrangements for the Shetland sandeel fishery.

Dogs

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has received to the consultation paper "The Control of Dogs"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* In Scotland we have received to date 110 responses to the consultation paper which was issued jointly with the Home Office, the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment. Most of the responses which we received were supportive of our proposals and my right hon. Friend will wish to consider carefully with colleagues what further action on dogs might be appropriate.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agriculture

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minster of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the efficiency of agriculture in terms of output and value of output per person engaged in each of the EEC countries; and if he will list them in league order.

Mr. Curry: Member states' shares of Community agricultural output are shown in column *(a)* of the table: information on gross value added—a measure of agricultural output—per annual labour unit on average is shown in column *(b)*. The information provides only a broad guide to comparative labour productivity for the agriculture sector as a whole: comparisons are affected by exchange rates, including differences between green and market rates, price levels and many other factors including variations in the weather. Labour productivity is a partial measure of overall efficiency since it ignores other factors of production, notably capital: comprehensive comparisons of productivity are not available. Less than 15 per cent. of Community output is produced in member states with higher labour productivity than the United Kingdom whereas over three quarters of Community output is accounted for by member states where labour productivity on average is lower than in the United Kingdom.

	Share of Community agricultural output average 1987 and 1988	*Gross value added*[1] *per annual labour unit average 1987 to 1989 (forecast)*
	per cent. (a)	*£*[2] *(b)*
Netherlands	7·7	22,400
Denmark	3·4	21,300
Belgium	3·0	17,000
United Kingdom	9·6	12,200
Luxembourg	0·1	11,500
France	23·2	10,700
Germany	14·4	10,600
Italy	18·9	7,100
Ireland	2·1	6,600
Spain	12·1	[3]5,300
Greece	3·8	4,600
Portugal	1·7	1,200

[1] Gross value added is the value of output minus current material inputs.
[2] Rounded to nearest £100.
[3] Relates to average of 1987 and 1988.

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food calculations based on Eurostat information.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the state of agriculture.

Mr. Curry: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) on 29 November, *Official Report*, column 1008.

Cereals

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been deducted from farmers in each of the 12 EEC states in cereals co-responsibility levy in each year since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Information provided by the Commission of the European Communities on cereals co-responsibility levy receipts in each member state is set out in the table. These omit Portugal because under its accession terms Portuguese farmers are exempt from levy until 1991. It should be noted that levy is not necessarily collected in the country of origin of the grain.

MECU (Budget)

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Belgium	5·203	18·958	13·814	12·89
Denmark	1·841	12·081	9·615	35·39
Germany	16·749	65·130	132·853	67·15
Greece	0·877	1·458	6·084	6·19
Spain	—	38·765	33·971	69·91
France	10·337	103·625	305·016	311·61
Ireland	0·766	4·131	9·390	6·68
Italy	10·074	37·430	33·589	56·24
Luxembourg	0·069	0·419	0·280	0·30
Netherlands	0·769	22·110	20·210	6·74
United Kingdom	9·745	62·732	71·837	116·11
EEC	56·430	361·839	636·660	689·22

DEFENCE

Defence Exports

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether his Department has a record of exports of defence equipment and munitions to Yugoslavia for each year during the period 1980 to 1990;

(2) whether the defence export services organisation maintains records of exports of defence material on a country-by-country basis;

(3) whether his Department has a record of exports of defence equipment and munitions to Cyprus for each year 1980 to 1990.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. Statistics of United Kingdom defence exports, derived from Customs and Excise, are set out by broad geographical regions in volume 2 of the annual SDE.

Astra Holdings plc

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has, at any time, received information from representatives of Astra Holdings plc relating to the export activities of its former subsidiary PRB.

Mr. Alan Clark: Shortly after acquiring PRB, Astra Holdings plc consulted the MOD about certain contracts which the company had inherited through its acquisition. These discussions took place in confidence.

Hunting

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date a licence was first issued to the Essex and Suffolk hunt to hunt on his Ministry's land at Colchester; and how frequently the licence is renewable.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Essex and Suffolk hunt has had a licence to hunt on Ministry of Defence land since before 1974. Records before that date are no longer retained. The licence is renewed annually.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place a copy of the licence issued to the Essex and Suffolk hunt to hunt on his Ministry's land at Colchester in the Library.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. The full terms of the licence are commercial-in-confidence between my Department and the Essex and Suffolk hunt.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual fee paid by the Essex and Suffolk hunt to hunt on his Ministry's land at Colchester.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This information is commercial-in-confidence between my Department and the Essex and Suffolk hunt.

Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to encourage the use of low-energy light bulbs in his Department's buildings and offices.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is our policy to install the most efficient suitable lighting systems in all newly designed buildings and offices, and in those undergoing major refurbishment. On existing installations the use of low-energy light bulbs is encouraged where practical.

Over-the-horizon Radar

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the appropriated funds required for the United States' share of the proposed joint United States-United Kingdom trial of an over-the-horizon radar in the United Kingdom was requested from the United States Congress in fiscal year 1991; and how much of this was authorised or appropriated.

Mr. Alan Clark: This is a matter for the United States Government.

Atomic Weapons Establishment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements currently exist for the disposal of nuclear waste from the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Nuclear waste is disposed of from the atomic weapons establishment taking advantage of nationally available disposal routes under arrangements which are overseen by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution of the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is intended that the company running the atomic weapons establishment after contractorisation will be able to alter the redundancy arrangements of the staff of the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The redundancy arrangements will form part of the conditions of service of staff. Any changes to the conditions of service will be a matter for negotiation between the contractor and the trade unions.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now make it his policy to release information on the number of staff in the safety division stationed at *(a)* the atomic weapons establishment, Cardiff, *(b)* the atomic weapons establishment, Burghfield, and *(c)* the atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, following the evidence given to the Select Committee on Defence, printed on page 81 of its ninth report, Session 1989-90, HC 237.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. It would not be in the national interest to do so.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are envisaged for the disposal of nuclear waste from the atomic weapons establishment after its contractorisation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The arrangements for the disposal of nuclear waste from the atomic weapons establishment will continue to be overseen by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution of the Department of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what differences there will be in the index-linking arrangements between the new atomic weapons establishment pension scheme that is due to be arranged as a result

of the contractorisation of the atomic weapons establishment and the existing principal civil service pension scheme and the UKAEA pension scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is intended that the benefit terms of the new AWE pension scheme include provision for pensions to be increased in line with PCSPS or principal non-industrial superannuation scheme increases.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements currently exist for redundancy payments under the principal civil service pension scheme and the UKAEA scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The current arrangements for making redundancy payments to AWE staff are set out in section 10 of the PCSPS and section 8 of the UKAEA PNISS. Broadly, these provide for benefits according to age, length of qualifying service and rate of pay at the time of redundancy. In the unlikely event that the redundancy benefits of PCSPS and the UKAEA PNISS amount to less than the statutory provision, staff may receive a special payment to bring them up to the level paid under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are planned for redundancy payments under the new AWE pension scheme that is due to be arranged as a result of the contractorisation of the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The new redundancy scheme will provide redundancy payments which, when taken together with those of the new pension scheme, will be at least as good as those currently provided under the PCSPS and UKAEA PNISS arrangements. However, in view of AWE's continuing need for staff, and the Government's firm commitment to the nuclear programme, redundancies are unlikely.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the proposed relationship between the compliance directorate and the safety division of the atomic weapons establishment under phase 2 of the contractorisation programme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The MOD compliance directorate based at AWE will be independent of the establishment's division. It will be staffed by Crown servants and, to carry out their role of contract oversight and compliance, there will need to be a close and co-operative relationship between them and the contractor's safety division.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps have been taken to ensure that the company currently producing proposals for the full contractorisation of the atomic weapons establishment will not derive an unfair advantage in competing for the contract in 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The interim-management contractor is not responsible for formulating proposals for full contractorisation of AWE. This task is the responsibility of the MOD and the usual steps will be taken to ensure full and fair competition for the eventual operating contract.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who will be the employer of members of staff in the safety division of the atomic weapons establishment under the proposed contractorisation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The staff of the safety division will become part of the contractor's organisation on full contractorisation.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is envisaged that the company that wins the contract to operate the atomic weapons establishment will have the power to alter the pension arrangements for the staff of the atomic weapons establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The new AWE pension scheme will be set up under trust deed which will include the rules of the scheme. The scheme will be managed by a trustee company specially set up for this purpose. The board of this trustee company will include persons nominated by the employing company, the Ministry of Defence and the members, or their representatives. In this way, members will have a say in the operation of the scheme. Any changes in the terms of the scheme will be negotiated between the employing company-commercial manager and the trade unions. MOD approval will be required before any changes in benefits or contributions can be implemented.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the company selected to operate the atomic weapons establishment after contractorisation will be allowed to alter the number and grades of staff in the safety division of the establishment.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The contractor will be bound by strict safety requirements which will include the maintenance of a fully effective internal safety organisation. The compliance directorate will ensure that safety requirements are met effectively and efficiently. Any detailed changes the contractor may wish to make would have to be compatible with this requirement.

HMS Challenger

Mr. Douglas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the total cost involved in the construction, repair, renewal and redesign of HMS Challenger at current market prices and the anticipated reserve price proposed for the vessel at this period.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The total project acquisition cost of HMS Challenger, together with the cost of the two docking periods which she has undergone is some £240 million at 1990-91 prices. The arrangements for the sale of the vessel are commercially confidential.

Iraqi Supergun

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on whether Iraq has test-fired a supergun.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not the practice to comment on such matters.

Adjutant General's Corps

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has determined which existing corps and functions should be included in the new Adjutant General's Corps; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I can confirm that my right hon. Friend has decided that the Adjutant General's Corps should include the following existing Corps, which will retain their individual cap badges:

Corps of Royal Military Police
Military Provost Staff Corps
Royal Army Educational Corps
Army Legal Corps

The Adjutant General's Corps will also include a new Corps, covering various administrative functions, whose title has not yet been determined. This new Corps will be responsible for the functions currently undertaken by the Royal Army Pay Corps, the staff clerk functions undertaken by the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Women's Royal Army Corps, and all other regimental clerks. Those members of the WRAC who do not elect to join existing Corps under our plans for the wider employment of women will also become members of this new Corps.

The Royal Army Chaplains' Department will not form part of the AG Corps, but will be closely associated with it and supported administratively by the Corps.

The formation of a single Adjutant General's Corps will offer a firm basis for rationalisation of the Army's personnel services and contribute to the reductions being sought in the support area following my right hon. Friend's statement on 25 July concerning "Options for Change".

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* visually impaired people, *(b)* deaf people, *(c)* mentally handicapped people and *(d)* people with agoraphobia will receive (i) lower rate attendance component of the disability living allowance, (ii) middle rate attendance component, (iii) higher rate attendance component, (iv) lower rate mobility component and (v) higher rate mobility component.

Mr. Scott: The numbers of people in each category who will receive the various rates of disability living allowance cannot be predicted reliably. The estimates in the table for the new lower rates of each component are derived from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys disability surveys, and give the numbers of people with each of these disabilities who come into the projected eligible populations. For the rates of the disability living allowance which equate to the existing benefits, the figures are based on those who in 1985 reported receipt of attendance allowance or mobility allowance in the OPCS surveys. Given the substantial increases in the caseloads for both benefits since 1985, the numbers in these groups will inevitably be much higher now.

Table 1

	Lower rates (in thousands)	
	Care (i)	*Mobility (iv)*
(a) Visually impaired people	40	55
(b) [Deaf people	10	15]
People with hearing impairments	60	65
(c) Mentally handicapped people	30	75

(d) People with agoraphobia cannot be identified from the OPCS data but these people are amongst the groups intended to be covered by the criteria for the lower rate mobility component.

Table 2

	Higher rates (in thousands)		
	care (ii)	*care (iii)*	*mobility (v)*
(a) Visually impaired people	95	85	70
(b) Deaf people	30	25	15
People with hearing impairments	115	85	90
(c) Mentally handicapped people	55	40	35

Benefit Payments (Worksop)

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the reasons why his Department's payments have not been made to claimants in Worksop; and when he expects the situation to return to normal.

Miss Widdecombe: Severe weather conditions on 10 and 11 December meant that the DSS office in Worksop was without power or water and the office had to be closed. Partial restoration of services on 12 December allowed the office to reopen that day. Management also opened a caller office in Retford to help make urgent payments. Normal service has now been restored.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local authority tenants of pensionable age are in receipt of *(a)* full housing benefit and *(b)* partial housing benefit; and what percentage they are of the total number of local authority tenants of pensionable age.

Miss Widdecombe: It is estimated that the number of recipients aged 60 and over in receipt of housing benefit at 31 May 1989 was:

	Rent rebates Great Britain	*Percentage of local authority tenants*[1]	*Rate rebates England and Wales only*	*Percentage of local authority tenants*[1]
	(000)		*(000)*	
House benefit recipients also in receipt of income support	735	(24)	615	(20)
Housing benefit recipients not in receipt of income support	950	(30)	755	(24)
TOTAL	1,685	(54)	1,370	(44)

[1] Local authority tenants are men aged 65 and over and women aged 60 and over.

Source:

(a) Housing Benefit Management Information System annual statistical enquiry, and

(b) Department of Employment Labour Force Survey April 1989.

Pensioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, further to the answer given to the hon. Member for Walsall, North on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *233*, he will publish similar estimates for April 1991; if he will include an allowance for the shortfall in the 1979 uprating relative to earnings; and if he will base his estimate of increases in earnings on data which would have been available shortly after each uprating.

Miss Widdecombe: The full rate of basic retirement pension, if revalued since 1979 by the higher of the annual percentage increase in prices or earnings six months before the date of the uprating would be £21·05 higher for a couple based solely on the husband's contribution and £13·05 more for a single person. The cost to the national insurance fund of these increases would amount to about £6 billion a year. It is not possible to calculate extra amounts on the basis of increases in earnings available after the April 1991 uprating.

Pensioners' Christmas Bonus

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what level the Christmas bonus for senior citizens would now stand if the original payment when first introduced in 1972 had been uprated by *(a)* the rise in retail prices or *(b)* the rise in average earnings; what is the estimated cost of paying the pensioners' Christmas bonus at £10 in the current year; what would be the cost of increasing it by (i) 50 per cent., (ii) 100 per cent., (iii) sufficient to take account of *(a)* and (iv) sufficient to take account of *(b)*; and whether he has any plans for future increases in the payment.

Miss Widdecombe: If the Christmas bonus had been uprated each year since 1972 in line with the increase in retail prices it would now be worth approximately £52. If it had been uprated each year since 1972 in line with earnings it would now be worth approximately £70.

The estimated cost of paying the pensioners' Christmas bonus in 1990-91 is approximately £114 million. Increasing it by 50 per cent. would cost an extra £57 million; increasing it by 100 per cent. would cost an extra £114 million.

Increasing the Christmas bonus to £52 would cost an extra £479 million and increasing it to £70 would cost an extra £684 million.

We have no plans at present for increasing the payment.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Details of most surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of the Department are contained in the DHSS yearbooks of research and development 1985-88 and in the Department of Health yearbook of research and development 1989, copies of which are in the Library. Opinion surveys have also been conducted as part of the following customer research activities:

Survey	*Date of Fieldwork*	*Purpose*
1. Public Attitudes to Social Secuirty	January 1985	Commissioned as part of the background to the review of social security to add to and bring up-to-date information already available from past surveys about people's views of social security. Details published in Cmnd 9519
Family Credit Campaign Evaluation	April 1989—March 1990	Evaluation of the Family Credit Campaign
Attendance Allowance Medical Examination	February—March 1990	To measure claimants' views of the Attendance Allowance Medical examination
Disability Benefit Information	April 1990	Evaluation of Disability Benefit Information Freeline trials
Community Charge Benefit Leaflets	April 1990	To check understanding of benefit in relation to new leaflet and press advertisements
Benefit target groups	April 1990	Research in relation to providing information
DSS Advertising	April 1990	Testing of telephone directories as suitable media for DSS advertising of local office addresses
Family Credit Advertising	April 1990	Evaluation of Family Credit advertising in Child Benefit order books and/or order book information awareness
Methods of Payment of Benefits	November—December '90	To assess awareness of and attitudes towards methods of payment of Retirement Pension, Child Benefit and Income Support

Taxi Fares (Reimbursement)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances taxi fares will be paid to claimants attending a regional medical service examination for invalidity benefit; what is the procedure for claiming taxi fares in advance; what is the procedure for reimbursing claimants their taxi fares; what is the average length of time taken to reimburse claimants' taxi fares; and how much has been paid out in taxi fares.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

Taxi fares are not ordinarily reimbursed to claimants attending a regional medical service examination for invalidity benefit. They may be paid if the claimant is unable to travel by public transport because of illness or disability, or if public transport is not available at the time of attendance.

A claimant wishing to claim taxi fares should contact the divisional medical office in advance. Each application is assessed individually and, if authorised, the claimant will be reimbursed at the time of examination.

If the claimant requests taxi fares at the time of examination, the public transport fares are paid immediately, and the request for the excess taxi fare forwarded to the divisional medical office. If authorised, the claim is either paid direct by the divisional medical office or forwarded to the regional finance office, DSS, for payment. The claim is usually reimbursed within 10 days.

The annual cost of reimbursing taxi fares is approximately £800 per year.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ulster Agricultural Organisation Society

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for financial support for the Ulster Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd.

Mr. Hanley: I have no proposals to provide financial support to the Ulster Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd. The organisation is, I understand, examining other possible ways of supplementing its income.

Eating Disorders Association

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what financial assistance he will make available to the Eating Disorders Association self-help group in Northern Ireland for the financial year commencing 1 April 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Department of Health and Social Services has grant-aided the central administrative costs of the Eating Disorders Association since its formation in Northern Ireland in 1985. The current year's grant is £9,240. Grant aid for the financial year 1991-92 will not be determined before March 1991.

Fallen Animals

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by processing plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in Upper Bann.

Mr. Hanley: I am aware of the recent decision by the rendering plants not to accept fallen animals. The Department of Agriculture issued advice to farmers and others on disposal of fallen animals in the present circumstances.

The Department is also ready to advise the industry on any proposals it may make to provide alternative means of disposal. It is the responsibility of the agriculture industry, like that of any other industry, to exercise a duty of care in the safe disposal of its waste and protect public health and the environment.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action the Department of Agriculture will adopt following the withdrawal of a collection service in respect of fallen animals.

Mr. Hanley: The agriculture industry is responsible for the safe disposal of its waste products in a manner which safeguards public health and avoids harm to the environment.

The Department of Agriculture has issued advice to the industry on the existing alternative disposal arrangements. It will continue to advise the industry on any new proposals which the industry may make.

Security

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Seventy-four people have died in Northern Ireland this year as a result of the security situation. Up to 30 September 1990, 288 people had been charged with terrorist-type offences, including six for murder and 49 for attempted murder, and 307 had been convicted of terrorist-type offences including two for murder and 21 for attempted murder.

Lough Neagh (Search and Rescue)

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to take any action to enhance search and rescue facilities on Lough Neagh.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responsibility for the preservation of life on Lough Neagh rests with the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In addition to the RUC and other emergency services there is a voluntary search and rescue service for the lough which has a vessel maintained by Craigavon borough council. In order to enhance this service the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland intends to make a one-off grant of £60,000 to the council for the purchase of a second vessel and ancillary equipment.

Parliamentary approval to this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, vote 4, section G. Pending that approval urgent expenditure estimated at £60,000 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has any information on the costs of independent homes for persons in need and nursing homes in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Copies of a report of a survey undertaken by Price Waterhouse, management consultants during July and August 1990 have been placed in the Library. Information about running and other costs was obtained from a sample of 72 registered homes for persons in need and nursing homes in respect of financial years commencing between October 1989 and May 1990. The key findings of the survey are as follows:

Costs per bed per week[1]

	Sample size	*Running costs*	*Running costs and capital costs*	*Running costs, capital costs and profit*
		£	£	£
Homes for persons in need	35			
Median		102·60	126·10	134·41
Mean		112·03	137·80	146·76
Nursing homes	37			
Median		160·17	197·01	209·82
Mean		157·90	194·22	206·85

[1] Assuming a 90 per cent. occupancy rate.

The present income support levels exceed these figures.

EMPLOYMENT

HSE Inspectors

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what date the HSE began separately to itemise expenditure on overseas subsistence and travel by inspectors of principal grade and above in its budget.

Mr. Forth: Expenditure on overseas travel and subsistence is not recorded separately from other travel and subsistence costs on HSE's accounting system.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many fraudulent claims by HSE principal grade and above inspectors have been identified in each of the last four years; and what action has been taken against those involved.

Mr. Forth: No fraudulent claims by HSE inspectors have been identified in the last four years.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the current procedures for the authorisation and payment of overseas travelling and subsistence allowances for HSE inspectors of principal grade and above; and what steps are taken to check the validity of all such payments.

Mr. Forth: All journeys to foreign countries by HSE staff require prior written approval at unified grade 3 or above before the visit can be undertaken.

Staff are provided with guidance on their entitlement to travelling and subsistence allowances by a headquarters section which checks for accuracy all claims made. As a further check on the validity of the claims, a proportion are returned to line managers.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young persons aged 16 or 17 years have applied for, and have been turned down for, a YTS place in the last year; and how many 16 or 17-year-olds he estimates are currently without a job, YTS place, or any benefit.

Mr. Forth: All young people under 18 years who are not in full-time education or a job and are seeking training are guaranteed a suitable place on youth training. The number of 16 and 17-year-olds who are currently without a job, YTS place, or any benefit, and who are not in full-time education, is not available.

Training (Budget Allocations)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table showing the budget allocations for the financial year 1990-91 for each (i) Training Agency area office and (ii) approved TEC showing the planned budget allocations for each area office and approved TEC for the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: The allocated budgets for each of the approved training and enterprise councils for the financial year 1990-91 are set out in the table. Budget allocations for the financial year 1991-92 are not yet available. Budgets are not allocated to area offices.

	Total allocated budget £ million
South East	
Isle of Wight	1·50
Hertfordshire	10·10
Heart of England	4·25
Hampshire	13·18
Milton Keynes and North Buckinghamshire	2·80
Kent	8·54
Essex	14·47
Thames Valley	10·50
London	
AZTEC	4·68
South West	
Somerset	6·88
Dorset	10·74
Devon/Cornwall	39·94
West Midlands	
Walsall	4·24
Coventry and Warwickshire	12·94
Staffordshire	16·71
Birmingham	12·35
East Midlands	
North Nottinghamshire	12·02
Suffolk	8·40
Norfolk and Waverney	17·33
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Calderdale/Kirklees	17·58
North Yorkshire	10·02
Rotherham	6·99
Sheffield	11·59
Leeds	8·59
North West	
South and East Cheshire	6·67
East Lancashire	12·56
METROTEC (Wigan)	6·12
Cumbria	13·94
Rochdale	5·60
Bolton and Bury	4·50

	Total allocated budget £ million
Oldham	7·40
Stockport and High Peak	4·76
Manchester	32·09
Northern	
County Durham	15·91
Tyneside	31·23
Wearside	17·39
Teeside	28·68
Northumberland	7·04
Wales	
West Wales	17·74
North East Wales	5·48
Mid Glamorgan	11·83

Individual budget figures relate to the period from the date when the TEC became operational to the end of the 1990-91 financial year.

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will produce a table showing the ET and YT budget allocations for each Training Agency area office and each approved TEC for the financial year 1990-91 and the planned budget allocations for the same during the financial year 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: The allocated budgets for ET and YT for each of the approved training and enterprise councils (TECs) for the financial year 1990-91 are set out in the table. Budget allocations for the financial year 1991-92 are not yet available. Budgets are not allocated to area offices.

	£ million YT	ET
South East		
Isle of Wight	0·65	0·34
Hertfordshire	4·44	1·96
Heart of England	2·24	0·81
Hampshire	7·72	3·00
Milton Keynes and North Bucks	1·52	0·59
Kent	5·36	2·66
Essex	9·90	5·41
Thames Valley	5·04	2·02
London		
AZTEC	1·72	1·40
South West		
Somerset	3·69	1·24
Dorset	5·9	2·15
Devon-Cornwall	21·05	10·98
West Midlands		
Walsall	2·09	1·43
Coventry and Warwickshire	7·08	3·14
Staffordshire	10·02	3·43
Birmingham	4·86	4·25
East Midlands		
North Nottinghamshire	6·70	2·56
Suffolk	4·84	1·29
Norfolk and Waveney	9·39	4·56
Yorkshire and Humberside		
Calderdale/Kirklees	9·40	5·13
North Yorkshire	4·71	2·78
Rotherham	2·97	2·58
Sheffield	5·23	3·85
Leeds	3·77	2·48
North West		
South and East Cheshire	3·77	0·92
East Lancashire	6·71	2·95
METROTEC (Wigan)	3·42	1·83
Cumbria	7·77	2·92
Rochdale	2·64	1·61
Bolton and Bury	2·58	0·79
Oldham	4·36	1·40
Stockport and High Peak	2·55	1·11
Manchester	14·29	9·56
Northern		
County Durham	8·64	5·15
Tyneside	17·10	7·60
Wearside	8·50	6·40
Teesside	14·80	11·80
Northumberland	3·49	1·77
Wales		
West Wales	7·15	6·11
North East Wales	3·05	1·28
Mid Glamorgan	6·70	4·28

Individual budget figures relate to the period from the date when the TEC became operational to the end of the 1990-91 financial year.

Tourism (Northumbria)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the numbers employed in tourism and related employment in the Northumbria tourist board area in each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: The only information for the Northumbria tourist board area in the period requested is for September 1987, when the estimated number of employees in tourism-related industries was 60,000. This figure does not include the self-employed, for whom comparable estimates are not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the method of calculation of estimates of monthly and quarterly employment in the apparel, knitting and textiles industries; and what is his Department's assessment of the possible margin of error;

(2) what was the extent of revisions to his Department's estimates of employment in the apparel, knitting and textiles industries following the most recent census of employment and labour force survey; and what were the reasons for these;

(3) what expressions of concern he has received from the apparel, knitting and textiles industries about the accuracy of his Department's estimates of employment in these industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Estimates are based on periodic censuses of employment, updated by employment trends shown in the monthly and quarterly samples of employers in the relevant industries. Estimates for periods since the latest census are adjusted to reflect employment trends indicated in the annual labour force surveys. Margins of error depend on a number of factors which are not capable of being fully quantified. Between censuses, samples for the apparel and knitwear industries are too small to merit their separate publication. Revisions to the estimates for the textile industries are shown in the table.

Current methods for producing monthly and quarterly estimates do not fully reflect the opening and closures of

business after the latest census benchmark. Officials met representatives of the Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance on 12 April 1990, and acknowledged that this would be a problem for industries characterised by a high number of closures. Officials explained that work on improving the monthly and quarterly estimates had begun in September 1989 and that progress was carefully monitored by Ministers. Details of these plans were revealed at the statistics users conference in November 1990.

Employees in employment—Great Britain
Textiles industry (Class 43) (SIC 1980)

Thousands

	Pre Census 1987	*Post Census 1987*	*Post LFS 1989*
June 1989	206·4	217·8	217·7
December 1989	—	—	214·6

Accident Claims

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 3 December, *Official Report*, column *40*, what is the statutory basis for the Health and Safety Executive's charge for factual statements requested in connection with civil claims.

Mr. Forth: Section 13(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 empowers the Health and Safety Executive acting on behalf of the Health and Safety Commission to charge for the provision of factual statements.

Employers (Prosecutions)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions of employers there have been in Scotland in every year since 1960 for producing false records.

Mr. Forth: Since 1960 there has been one such prosecution under wages council legislation and that was in 1982.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions of employers there have been in Scotland in every year since 1960 for illegal underpayment of wages.

Mr. Forth: There have been five such prosecutions under wages council legislation since 1960, one in 1962 and four in 1977.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions of employers there have been in Scotland in every year since 1960 for failure to produce records.

Mr. Forth: Since 1960 there has been one such prosecution under wages council legislation and that was in 1979.

Restart

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people attended a restart interview in the six months ended September, and what were the results of those interviews.

Mr. Jackson: The restart interview programme provides a framework within which the Employment Service provides help for long-term unemployed people. It provides a gateway to the range of employment and training opportunities available as well as being a means of ensuring that claimants remain available for and are actively seeking work.

During the period in question 630,000 people were interviewed and immediately following their interview 10,500 started work, 35,600 began training under employment training, 27,300 started in job club, 14,400 started a restart course and 4,200 attended an enterprise allowance scheme awareness day.

These figures reflect only the direct results of restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview.

Over the same period the Employment Service as a whole placed 118,000 long-term unemployed people into work, 74,500 into employment training, 68,600 into job club and 7,700 into enterprise allowance schemes.

HEALTH

Family Doctors

2. **Mr. Moss:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much spending on the family doctor service has risen in the last 11 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Eighty-five per cent. in real terms.

Cornwall Air Ambulance

15. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will review his decision not to contribute to the funding of the Cornwall air ambulance during the period of its evaluation.

Mr. Dorrell: No.

Drug Prescribing

16. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to ensure that general practitioners will not be prevented or restricted from prescribing drugs by the action of family health service associations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The indicative prescribing scheme will promote quality in this part of the health service and will in no way prevent general practitioners from prescribing all the drugs their patients need.

Rural Health Facilities

17. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he now proposes to introduce any new initiatives to improve health service facilities in rural areas.

Mr. Dorrell: From 1 April 1991 we shall introduce significant improvements with the rural practice payments scheme for general practitioners in truly rural areas and the health service reforms will ensure health and family health service authorities will in future pay particular attention to the needs of their residents for co-ordinated hospital, community and primary health care.

Nottingham Health Authority

18. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the rate of increase in funding for the Nottingham health authority over the last five years has been.

Mr. Dorrell: Over the period 1985-86 to 1990-91 Nottingham health authority received an average annual revenue cash increase of 8·6 per cent., which represents a 13·1 per cent. real increase in resources.

National Health Service and Community Care Act

19. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which local authorities are planning to implement the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 before April 1993.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The first phase of community care implementation under the Act begins in April 1991, when authorities will introduce complaints procedures and inspection units and the specific grants for services for mental illness and drugs and alcohol become available. But we know that many authorities intend to implement, at least in part, proposals scheduled for introduction in phases 2 and 3, in advance of the statutory requirements.

Health Care Purchasing

20. **Sir Hal Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments he makes of the balance of advantage between health care providers and purchasers.

Mr. Waldegrave: Patients will be the prime beneficiaries of the separation of the roles of purchasers and providers in the reformed national health service.

Waiting Lists

21. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what initiatives he has to reduce hospital waiting lists.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) earlier today.

Community Health Services

22. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to improve the arrangements for liaison between community health service and social services departments concerning individual patient care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In implementing our policy for community care, social services departments and national health service authorities will be required by the National Health Service and Community Care Act to liaise in planning services. They will also need to work closely in the development of assessment and care management arrangements for the delivery of services to individuals.

Family Planning

23. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of family planning services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We continue to regard family planning as an important health care service. Our policy remains that people should be free to choose their source of family planning advice and treatment and that health authority clinic services complement those provided by family doctors.

London Ambulance Service

24. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that the proceedings of the London ambulance service board are made public.

Mr. Dorrell: The South West Thames regional health authority has overall responsibility for the London ambulance service—LAS—and the LAS board reports to the RHA. The purpose of the board is to develop and improve the management and operations of the LAS. It would not be appropriate for its proceedings to be made public. But an annual report will be published.

NHS Trusts

25. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to allow new hospitals or existing non-national health service hospitals such as military hospitals to become self-governing national health service trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: New national health service hospitals will be eligible to apply for NHS trust status once they are operational. Any NHS hospital or other unit actively involved in patient care may apply for trust status. Military hospitals are the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence and thus are not eligible.

28. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service trust applications were rejected on the grounds of financial non-viability.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None. The decisions on the trust applications were taken in the light of all the information available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, of which the financial assessment was one element.

Junior Doctors

26. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in reducing the hours worked by junior doctors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yesterday I signed an agreement with the medical profession to reduce junior doctors' hours. Under the agreement—the result of intensive talks by representatives of all the relevant bodies—junior doctors will move towards a maximum working week of 72 hours on duty—and preferably less. As a first step, the Government will fund 200 new consultant and 50 new staff grade posts in England in 1991-92 in order to stimulate the introduction of changed working patterns. The other United Kingdom health departments will be making their financial contribution in support of this initiative.

General Practitioners

27. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much funding for general practitioner practice improvements has increased in the last 11 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Expenditure on GP premises has risen fourfold in real terms since 1979-80, with much of the increase due to payments through cost rent and improvement grants for improvements to premises.

NHS Funding

29. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the level of national health service funding will be next year; and what it was in 1978.

Mr. Dorrell: Next year the national health service in England will have a total of £26·2 billion to spend. This represents a real terms increase of 50 per cent. on the 1978-79 gross spending total of £6·5 billion.

Hormone Replacement Therapy

30. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the level of funding undertaken by his Department to promote hormone replacement therapy as a preventive treatment for menopausal illnesses.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Decisions on prescribing hormone replacement therapy rest on clinical judgment and are therefore a professional matter. We were pleased to provide funding of £9,500 for a workshop on HRT and osteoporosis, a total of £53,000 to three voluntary organisations in this field, and £128,000 for research projects. The number of prescriptions for HRT in 1989 was 2·9 million which cost the NHS £29·5 million.

Nurses (Training Courses)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of nurses attending training courses in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Neuroscience

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated net present value of the proposed capital spending of over £50 million to move neuroscience services from Shooters Hill to Denmark Hill.

Mr. Dorrell: The option appraisal demonstrated that the development at Denmark Hill would be the cheapest in capital terms and significantly better on non-financial service criteria such as integration, turbulence and timing. Calculation of the net present value would require non-financial service benefits to be expressed in monetary terms and this was not considered necessary.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate the numbers of extra neuroscience consultations and procedures expected as the result of the proposed move of neuroscience from Shooters Hill to Denmark Hill.

Mr. Dorrell: The new centre at Denmark Hill will be a replacement facility designed for the same population served by the existing centres but which will offer a much improved standard of service. It is anticipated that it will treat approximately the same number of patients.

In addition, a completely new magnetic resonance imaging facility will be available which will offer a non-invasive, faster and more accurate diagnostic service.

Nurses' Homes

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each London borough the amounts by which lodging charges in nurses' homes have been abated in 1990-91 to take account of the abolition of domestic rates.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Lodging charges in nurses' homes were abated from 1 April 1990 by standard percentages varying between 18·6 per cent. and 21·7 per cent.—the precise figure depending on the category of accommodation—after increases for 1990-91 were applied, to take account of the abolition of domestic rates. Health authorities have had a degree of flexibility over the charges they make since April 1989. Information on the cash value of abatements by London boroughs is not held centrally.

Residential Homes

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received from organisations representing private care home owners regarding the availability of residential care for elderly and disabled persons.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Representations from private care home owners have been received on a variety of issues including residential and nursing home aspects of the Government's plans for the future provision and development of community care.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authorities have transferred elderly residents' homes to independent trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Mental Health

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to MIND's work for people with mental health problems to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 4 to 8 February 1991.

Operations

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the number of national health service patients in 1990 who have had operations for (i) hysterectomies and (ii) prostate gland removals; and what is his estimate of the number of patients on the waiting list for these operations and the average time spent on the waiting list.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest figures available centrally show that in the year ending March 1989 there

were an estimated 65,000 completed episodes of hospital care for patients having an hysterectomy and 46,700 episodes for prostate gland removal. The estimated mean waiting time before admission for these operations was 14·1 weeks and 15·9 weeks respectively. Information about patients currently on waiting lists is collected by the specialty of intended treatment, not by individual diagnosis or condition.

Juveniles (Remand in Custody)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the numbers and percentages of juveniles remanded to secure establishments by the magistrates courts of Cardiff, Bristol and London for the last available year; and what were the comparable figures five and 10 years ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There is no power for the courts to remand juveniles direct to local authority secure accommodation. Local authorities can place juveniles in secure accommodation who have been remanded to their care, but information is not collected centrally on the courts at which such juveniles appeared.

Home Carers

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to establish a register of home carers in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to set up a register of home carers in England. Plans in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

HIV-AIDS Prevention Co-ordinator

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district HIV-AIDS prevention co-ordinators have been appointed; and how their work will be monitored and evaluated.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As at November 1990, more than 150 district health authorities in England had in place officers with responsibility for the co-ordination of district HIV prevention work. The Department has asked all district health authorities to finalise arrangements by March 1991.

Monitoring and evaluation of co-ordinators' work will, primarily, be achieved through each regional health authority's annual AIDS (Control) Act report. The Department is currently considering HIV prevention co-ordinators' continuing support and training needs in the light of a national seminar held last month which I attended.

Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women whose death was caused by lung cancer for each year since 1979 for England and Wales;

(2) if he will list the number of deaths caused by breast cancer for each year since 1979 in England and Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of deaths with an underlying cause of (a) breast cancer and (b) lung cancer, in England and Wales 1979-89 is shown in the table:

Number of deaths with underlying cause (a) Breast cancer (b) Lung cancer, England and Wales 1979-89

Year	Breast cancer[1]		Lung cancer[1]	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1979	83	12,091	26,834	7,926
1980	78	12,167	26,783	8,385
1981	84	12,513	26,297	8,430
1982	87	12,405	25,962	8,870
1983	87	12,672	26,502	9,070
1984	99	13,310	26,041	9,698
1985	79	13,513	25,994	9,798
1986	105	13,641	25,235	10,022
1987	89	13,751	24,830	10,308
1988	73	13,723	24,671	10,631
1989	76	14,008	23,821	10,760

[1]International Classification of Disease Code 9th revision.
174 malignant neoplasm of female breast.
175 malignant neoplasm of male breast.
162 malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung.

HIV-AIDS Funds

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what international comparisons are available on Government funding within individual European countries for HIV and AIDS.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally.

GP Budgets

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doctors have now opted for practice budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are currently around 325 practices undertaking the preparatory work necessary to become fund holders from 1 April 1991.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent consideration his Department has given to the call for an out-of-court settlement for people with haemophilia who were infected by the AIDS virus in the course of national health service treatment.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) on 11 December at columns *364-65*.

Diabetics (Disposable Needles)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make available on prescription for diabetics suitable disposable needles for insulin pen-type injections.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: NHS supply arrangements for insulin pens and needles need to be considered together. Subject to our normal evaluation of individual brands, we would consider making pens and needles prescribable, as an alternative to syringes, if this could be done without additional cost. Discussions with suppliers are currently in progress.

Health Authorities (Blacklisting)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received concerning blacklisting by health authorities in respect of applicants for jobs at other health authorities; and what guidance is issued to health authority officials in respect of such practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No such representations have been received. Health authorities are well aware that no boycott of staff should take place.

Surrey GP Formulary

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much public money was spent on the production and distribution of the Surrey family health services authority's "General Practice Formulary 1990"; and whether the authority plans to monitor its use by NHS doctors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The production and distribution of Surrey FHSA's "General Practice Formulary 1990" cost around £19,000. The FHSA plans to monitor the use and effectiveness of the formulary through visits and inquiries by the medical adviser and feedback to the formulary committee which is keeping the document under review.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to monitor the use and effectiveness of the general practitioners' formulary produced and distributed by the Surrey family health services authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Family health services authorities should encourage voluntary formulary development and use. Where, like Surrey, FHSAs provide GPs locally with a core formulary it is their responsibility to monitor its use and effectiveness.

Pharmaceutical Products

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his assessment of the likely effects of health authorities wholesaling pharmaceutical products to family health services authority contractors.

Mr. Dorrell: We are currently considering whether to issue guidance to health authorities.

Health Authorities (Deficits)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district health authorities have underlying deficits in 1990-91; and which will not have cleared these by the start of 1991-92.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will indicate, on the basis of figures presently available to him, the district health authorities likely to run into deficit at the end of the present financial year; and if he will give in each case his estimate of that deficit.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* An underlying deficit is a measure of the extent to which health authorities have been incurring recurrent expenditure in excess of their recurrent income. This represents bad financial management and has been criticised by the Public Accounts Committee of the House. In the planning guidance for 1990-91 issued in July 1989 health authorities were advised to eliminate such imbalances. As a result, the number of districts in deficit has fallen from 122 in 1989-90 to an end-of-September estimate of 51 for 1990-91. The districts forecasting deficits together with an estimate of the deficit at that date are set out in the table.

All of these are taking action in 1990-91 to tackle their problems. It is not yet possible to reach a definite view, but we believe that nearly all will have cleared deficits by the start of 1991-92. This is a major achievement and means that nearly all districts will enter 1991-92 on a sound financial basis which will enable them to take full advantage of the opportunities which the reforms to the NHS offer to improve the health of their residents.

DISTRICTS IN DEFICIT BY REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Northern
- Hartlepool (£0·6 million)
- North Tees (£0·7 million)
- Darlington (£0·3 million)

Yorkshire
- Hull (£0·1 million)
- Scunthorpe (£0·5 million)
- Leeds Eastern (£0·7 million)
- Leeds Western (£1·5 million)
- Pontefract (£0·2 million)
- Airedale (£0·4 million)

East Anglian
- Peterborough (£0·1 million)
- West Suffolk (£0·5 million)
- East Suffolk (£0·6 million)
- Norwich (£1·2 million)

North West Thames
- North West Hertfordshire (£0·7 million)
- Ealing (£0·2 million)
- Parkside (£1·7 million)

North East Thames
- Basildon and Thurrock (£1·3 million)
- North East Essex (£0·6 million)
- West Essex (£1·5 million)
- Bloomsbury (£1·7 million)
- City and Hackney (£1·2 million)
- Waltham Forest (£0·8 million)

South East Thames
- Brighton (£0·7 million)
- South East Kent (£0·3 million)
- Dartford (£0·1 million)
- Maidstone (£0·7 million)
- Medway (£0·8 million)
- Tunbridge Wells (£1·0 million)
- Bexley (£0·6 million)
- Bromley (£0·1 million)
- West Lambeth (£3·1 million)
- Camberwell (£2·3 million)
- Lewisham and North Southwark (£3·6 million)

South West Thames
- West Surrey and North East Hants (£0·2 million)
- East Surrey (£2·3 million)

Oxford
- East Berkshire (£0·7 million)
- West Berkshire (£0·3 million)
- Aylesbury Vale (£0·6 million)
- Wycombe (£0·1 million)
- Oxfordshire (£0·6 million)

West Midlands
- Worcester (£0·3 million)
- Shropshire (£1·2 million)
- Central Birmingham (£0·7 million)
- South Birmingham (£1·1 million)
- West Birmingham (£0·4 million)
- Sandwell (£0·1 million)

Mersey
- Chester (£0·2 million)
- Halton (£0·1 million)
- Liverpool (£0·7 million)

North Western
- Burnley (£0·4 million)
- Trafford (£0·1 million)

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 19 December 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what expenditure has been incurred by his Department in ensuring slaughterhouses in Northern Ireland meet European Community standards.

Mr. Needham: During the five-year period ended 31 March 1990, capital grant assistance of £4,554,502 has been paid to the eight privately owned beef slaughter and processing companies in Northern Ireland which have facilities approved to Economic Community hygiene standards.

All these companies have abattoirs with integrated further processing facilities and the grant assistance paid was mainly towards expenditure on buildings and equipment for meat processing. Only two of the companies received grant payments totalling £252,300 towards abattoir capital expenditure. In no case was grant provided solely towards abattoir expenditure to achieve European Community standards.

Electrostatic Data Analysis Testing

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the reasons for the delay in the report on the ESDA test on the evidence relating to the case concerning four members of the Ulster Defence Regiment from Armagh, and ordered by the chief constable on 31 July.

Dr. Mawhinney: The report has been delayed by the need to subject a large volume of material to detailed and thorough examination; but I understand that the work is now virtually complete and that the Northern Ireland forensic laboratory expects to be able to submit its findings to the Royal Ulster Constabulary shortly.

Fair Employment

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment has been made of the fair employment implications of the loss of 20 action for community employment jobs in west Belfast.

Mr. Needham: There has been no net loss of ACE jobs in west Belfast.

Disabled People

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals *(a)* over 65 years, *(b)* physically disabled and *(c)* mentally disabled were receiving hospital, residential or nursing home care in each year since 1985 in each health board area in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: This information is not available centrally.

District Nursing

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were registered for ongoing treatment through the district nursing system in each health board area in each year since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of patient visits carried out by district nurses.

Health and Social Services board

Year	*Eastern*	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*
1985	714,359	344,679	n.a.	228,359
1986	[1]721,674	341,505	312,902	211,842
1987	n.a.	329,073	316,602	247,395
1988-89	837,178	[2]319,024	312,981	222,986
1989-90	853,280	[3]320,873	307,260	229,947

Notes:
n.a.—Not available.
[1] 1986-87.
[2] 1988.
[3] 1989.

Political Vetting

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of all instances where public funds have been withdrawn from Northern Ireland organisations under the Government's political vetting policy; how many of the decisions were appealed; and what was the result of each appeal.

Mr. Brooke: There is no political vetting. However, under the terms of the policy reflected in the written reply of 27 June 1985 by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, public funds have been denied in a total of 26 cases. On further review funding has been restored in four cases. It is not Government policy to reveal details of individual cases.

Glor na nGael

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and what were the sources of representations he has received in relation to the withdrawal of funds from Glor na nGael.

Mr. Brooke: Written representations have been received from over 150 bodies and individuals including voluntary organisations, interest groups, trade unions, politicians, other public figures and various private individuals both within Northern Ireland and further afield.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been spent by his Department on public safety campaigns encouraging the use of domestic smoke alarms in each of the last five years; how much money is budgeted for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

	£s
1985	—
1986	—
1987	—

	£s
1988	10,500
1989	17,100
1990	[1]21,600

[1] Anticipated

EC Funds

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much money has been expended in the Ballymoney borough council area by the Northern Ireland Departments apart from money expended under the various EEC funds;

(2) how much money has been expended in the Moyle council area by the Northern Ireland Departments apart from money expended under the various EEC funds;

(3) how much money has been expended in the Ballymena borough council area by the Northern Ireland Departments apart from money expended under the various EEC funds.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 13 December 1990]:* The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations have taken place with energy efficiency projects about the network installer areas under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is open to any organisation engaged in the delivery of energy efficiency services to apply to become a network installer under the home energy efficiency scheme. I understand that, in drawing up the areas for which applications would intially be invited, the Energy Action Grants Agency sought advice from both Neighbourhood Energy Action and Energy Action Scotland.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the cost of the advertising campaign for the flotation of the 12 regional electricity companies of England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The costs of the campaign are still being finalised and will be announced to Parliament in the normal manner as soon as they are available.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the cost of the advertising campaign for the flotation of the two generating companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The full costs of the privatisation, including advertising costs, will be made available to Parliament in the normal way.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what policy considerations led him to reject institutional tendering as a method of flotation for the two generating companies in the electricity supply industry of England and Wales;

(2) what policy considerations led him to choose a public offer flotation for the two generating companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Decisions have yet to be taken on the precise structure of the sale of National Power and PowerGen. In intend to float both companies next February, subject to market conditions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, what numbers of employees applied for shares under employee priority application procedures, in each of the 12 regional electricity company areas.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The numbers of employees who applied under the employee priority offers are as follows:

	[1]*Number of employee priority applications*
Eastern Electricity	4,073
East Midlands Electricity	3,328
London Electricity	2,546
Manweb	2,016
Midlands Electricity	3,188
Northern Electric	2,026
NORWEB	3,549
SEEBOARD	2,307
Southern Electric	3,237
South Wales Electricity	1,559
South Western Electricity	2,741
Yorkshire Electricity	3,050

[1] Provisional figures.

These figures exclude employees who have applied under the free and matching offers alone.

Gas and Electrical Installations

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department will seek to place upon suppliers of electricity and gas a requirement to carry out periodic checks on all domestic and other installations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No. All consumers are responsible for ensuring that the electricity and gas installations on their own premises are safe. The electricity and gas suppliers urge consumers to arrange checks on their installations regularly. This message is reinforced from time to time in newspapers, in billing material and so on. There is adequate guidance available from the suppliers and others.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to make a further non-fossil fuel obligation order in respect of projects involving renewable energy sources.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to the reply, 19 November 1990, c. 7]:* In announcing the initial order setting a non-fossil fuel obligation for renewable sources of energy, I noted that a number of projects had proved not yet ready to meet the requirements of the legislation. To give these projects, and any others, an early opportunity to go forward, I have decided to make a second order setting a non-fossil fuel obligation for renewables in 1991. This will specify levels of renewables-sourced electricity generating

capacity required to be available to the regional electricity companies, in addition to those required under the initial renewables order (SI 1990 No. 1859), during the period from 1 January 1992 until 31 December 1998.

Before making the order I shall, as required under the legislation, consult the regional electricity companies and the Director General of Electricity Supply.

However, I currently have it in mind that the new order should be set at a level which will require the regional electricity companies to enter into contracts for some 150 to 200 MW DNC of generating capacity. I also have it in mind to introduce separate bands within the order for landfill gas, hydro, waste incineration and wind. This would give each of those technologies an opportunity to make a contribution to the capacity required under the order, and so would promote the Government's objective of stimulating the development and application of renewable sources of energy which have prospects of being economically competitive and environmentally acceptable.

I shall determine the size of the bands, in the light of bids by generators and after the statutory consultations, at a level to strike an appropriate balance between diversity of renewable generating technologies and the cost to the electricity consumer. I may decide, in the light of the consultations, to omit a band or to combine two or more bands. However, I currently have it in mind that the bands, and the band sizes, should be as follows:

	MW DNC
Wind power	25-50
Hydro	5-10
Landfill gas	30-60
Municipal and general industrial waste incineration	50-100
Others (eg. sewage gas, combustion of special waste)	15-30

The bands adopted for the 1991 renewables order will be without prejudice to the format of the further renewables orders that the Government intend to introduce during the 1990s.

My Department, in consultation with the RECs and the Office of Electricity Regulation, has reviewed the procedures for making NFFO orders in the light of the experience gained from the first one. A number of those consulted thought it important that the timetable should be less compressed.

Against this background I propose to make the next order, and to lay it before Parliament, in the autumn of 1991. I understand that the RECs will begin the process of selecting projects in the new year, when they will announce the procedures that they propose to adopt.

My Department is publicising these proposals through "Renewables Energy Bulletin No. 4", a copy of which I am placing in the Library of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Oral Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what savings his Department would make were no notice given of oral questions to Ministers and they were answered without civil service time being used on briefings.

Mr. MacGregor: No savings would be made and costs could well increase, because time and effort would be involved in wider briefing.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the average length of time taken and the average cost involved of officials' time in his Department preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions.

Mr. MacGregor: The time taken in preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions is not routinely recorded in my Department although estimates would be made where there is a likelihood of exceeding the disproportionate cost threshold (currently £250). However, following an interdepartmental exercise in 1972 in which the Department participated an assessment was made of the average cost throughout all Departments of answering an oral question. This assessment was based on staff time, using average rates of pay and associated costs for the grades concerned, together with a share of the cost of parliamentary sections and any substantial non-staff costs such as computer usage. This assessed figure is regularly updated and currently stands at £99.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctic

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what decisions regarding the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities for the Antarctic have been agreed by Britain's representatives at the Santiago convention; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The situation at the end of the 11th Antarctic treaty special consultative meeting with respect to CRAMRA is set out in paragraph 20 of the interim report of the meeting. I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 12 December, column *421-22*, to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) for the text.

Bishop Laslo Tokes

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about the infringements of the human rights of the Romanian bishop, Laslo Tokes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[pursuant to his reply, 14 December, c. 530]:* Her Majesty's ambassador in Bucharest has spoken to Bishop Tokes to ascertain his safety and that of his family. Bishop Tokes confirmed that although some threats have been made, he is unharmed and the Romanian authorities are taking an active interest in ensuring his safety.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will bring forward proposals to end controls on local authorities' ability to borrow money to meet local needs;

(2) if he will make it his policy to introduce proposals to replace existing controls on local authority borrowing powers with a statutory requirement to pay back loans from revenue over a minimum period;

(3) what are his reasons for continuing central controls on local authority capital spending; and if he will make a statement on the achievements of this policy.

Mr. Key: No. Local authority capital expenditure which is mainly financed by borrowing amounts to a quarter of all public sector capital expenditure. Since the end of the last century, successive Governments have found it necessary to exercise some control over local authority capital expenditure and borrowing.

Toxic Sites

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made to compile a central index of toxic sites; and when he expects such an index to be available.

Mr. Baldry: The question of compilation of a national list of seriously contaminated and polluting sites was considered in the Government's response to the Select Committee on the Environment's first report on contaminated land. We concluded that this was not a practical possibility. However, we have taken powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to require local authorities to set up public registers of all land in their areas which, because of past or present uses, may be contaminated.

We will consult widely on the scope of these registers and the methods to be used in compiling them. Depending on the outcome of consultations, we hope that authorities will be able to proceed with compilation of registers during 1992-93.

Charitable Housing Associations

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in tabular form the number of houses and flats owned by charitable housing associations in each district or borough in Hertfordshire.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to my hon. Friend direct.

Special Needs Housing

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make additional funding available to provide the homeless and others with special needs with move-on accommodation to relieve the pressure on existing high-care hostels.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on Monday 17 December 1990, column 24, to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes).

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the expenditure by local housing authorities on energy efficiency measures in homes since 1983.

Mr. Yeo: The following figures show capital expenditure by English local authorities on:

£ million

	Homes Insulation Scheme	*Energy conservation work on local authorities' own stock*[1]
1983-84	24·9	17·1
1984-85	25·2	17·0
1985-86	27·6	10·5
1986-87	25·2	13·2
1987-88	21·3	15·8
1988-89	7·2	20·2
[2]1989-90	7·0	52·5

[1] Expenditure on specific energy conservation schemes only. It does not include the cost of relevant works, e.g. the installation of insulation etc, which are carried out as part of general conversion or improvement programmes.
[2] Provisional.

Water Quality

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the most recent information on the number of regional water companies that do not comply with EEC regulations on water quality.

Mr. Baldry: All water companies already achieve most of the standards in the Water Quality Regulations, which incorporate the requirements of the EC drinking water directive. Where a standard is not consistently achieved at present, the company has been required to give an undertaking that it will carry out remedial action by the earliest possible date, taking practicalities into account. An up-to-date summary of the position will be given in the first annual report of the drinking water inspectorate, to be published next summer.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what measures he will implement to encourage local authorities to move towards a target of 50 per cent. recycling of domestic refuse where such treatment of waste is more costly that the traditional landfilling;

(2) if it is proposed that under the Environmental Protection Act, municipal solid waste disposal costs will be compared with municipal solid waste recycling costs;

(3) how the costs for the disposal of municipal solid wastes and recycling will be calculated; and what account will be taken of collection, transport and man hours;

(4) which of the waste disposal authority or its waste collection authority in the event of collection authorities contracting directly with a waste recycler will be financially liable for the costs of an operation.

Mr. Baldry: My Department will be consulting early next year about the new duty on waste disposal authorities to pay credits in respect of the costs of disposal of household waste avoided by recycling. We are currently developing a method for the calculation of credits. It will be up to each organisation which undertakes recycling to assess viability in the light of costs, benefits and credits available. We do not expect recycling to take place where it is economically and environmentally unviable.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how authorities' assets will be valued before being transferred to a local authority waste disposal

contractor; and what liabilities will be attached to existing landfill sites as an ongoing financial responsibility for such local authority waste disposal contractors.

Mr. Baldry: Advice on valuation of assets will be included in a draft circular giving advice on the new arrangements for waste disposal under the Environmental Protection Act and on local authority waste disposal companies. This draft circular should be available early in the new year. Full liability for restoration and after-care costs of existing landfill sites will transfer with sites.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how duty of care responsibilities under the Environmental Protection Act will affect landfill sites currently operating, but with many years' capacity still open to them.

Mr. Baldry: The Environmental Protection Act 1990 contains new measures whereby a licensee may not surrender his licence without the consent of the Waste Regulation Authority, and that consent may not be given unless the authority is satisfied that the condition of the land is unlikely to cause pollution of the environment or harm to human health. The licensee will therefore remain responsible for the monitoring of the land and any remedial action necessary until the authority accepts the surrender and issues a certificate of completion. The licensee will need to ensure that the resources to enable him to meet these obligations are set aside during the active, revenue-earning, phase of the landfill. Licences already issued under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 will automatically become waste management licences when the relevant sections of the Environmental Protection Act are implemented, and they will be subject to the provisions of the new Act.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the housing investment programme bids received, and the agreed level of programme, by his Department for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Yeo: The table compares local authorities' bids with the capital allocations, which provide part of the available resources to fund capital expenditure, and actual outturn.

Local authority housing capital expenditure: England: £ million

	Proposed programme	*HIP allocation*[1]	*Gross expenditure outturn*
1982-83	3,480	2,192	2,483
1983-84	3,560	2,233	3,176
1984-85	4,480	1,852	3,187
1985-86	4,870	1,605	2,802
1986-87	5,420	1,459	2,883
1987-88	6,040	1,400	3,151
1988-89	6,650	1,331	3,470
1989-90	6,330	1,095	[3]4,442
1990-91	6,500	[2]1,913	N.A.
1991-92	[3]6,020	[2]1,861	N.A.

[1] For the years up to 1989-90 Housing Investment Programme allocations made by the Department relate to the borrowing approvals available to local authorities to finance their housing capital programmes. In addition capital expenditure could be financed from capital receipts (subject to certain conditions) and from revenue sources. A new capital finance system was introduced for 1990-91 in which the HIP allocations comprise annual capital guidelines and resources for specified capital grants. A proportion of local authorities' usable receipts are then taken into account in arriving at a figure for the basic credit approval which permits borrowing.

[2] Allocations made to date for these two years.

[3] provisional.

Water Supply

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made for the enforcement of the general duties placed on water companies by sections 37 and 67 of the Water Act 1989 to provide water supply and sewerage in their areas.

Mr. Trippier: These duties hitherto have been enforceable by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales. Under a general authorisation given by my right hon. Friends, they are now enforceable by the Director General of Water Services, and he will deal with any complaint that a company has not fulfilled its statutory duties.

Environmental Organisations

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish details of the new fund to help finance voluntary organisations in the furtherance of policies set out in "This Common Inheritance," (Cm. 1200); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to publish details of the new fund to help finance voluntary organisations in the furtherance of policies set out in "This Common Inheritance" (Cm. 1200); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I am very pleased to announce that my Department has today issued invitations to voluntary groups to apply for project funding under the new environmental grant fund. The grant is available exclusively for projects which will help to further the policies set out in the White Paper "This Common Inheritance", published in September 1990.

We are eager to use the new fund to support practical projects at the local level. We will particularly favour projects which show innovations or which involve new groups in environmental work. Funding will normally be in the form of a 50 per cent. contribution to the overall project cost with an unlimited proportion of this being available to meet capital costs. Projects can be funded for up to three years and will be closely monitored to assess their effectiveness.

In order to bring the scheme quickly into operation, we have decided for this first year only to restrict applications to national and regional organisations. We will be discussing with the voluntary sector how the scheme might be extended for future years to target local groups directly.

In this first year £650,000 is available. In 1993-94 when the fund is fully operational £1·5 million will be available.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Ashby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in regard to Leicester city council under part I of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has today issued a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 requiring Leicester city council to expose refuse collection work to competitive tendering again by 1 November 1991. He has taken this action because he was not satisfied with the response which Leicester city council made to the notice served on 11 September 1990 under section 13 of the Act.

That notice set out the Secretary of State's view that Leicester city council had acted contrary to the requirement of section 7(7) of the Act (which is that, in reaching a decision to assign work to its own work force, an authority must not act in a manner having the effect or intended or likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition) in that, in assessing the cost of accepting a tender from an external contra[illegible] it took account of certain fixed overhead costs.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take in regard to Thurrock borough council under part I of the Local Government Act 1988.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has today issued a direction under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 requiring Thurrock borough council to expose street cleaning work to competitive tendering again by 1 November 1991. He has taken this action because he was not satisfied with the response which Thurrock borough council made to the notice served on 3 October 1990 under section 13 of the Act.

That notice set out the Secretary of State's view that Thurrock borough council had acted contrary to the requirement of section 7(7) of the Act (which is that, in reaching a decision to assign work to its own work force, an authority must not act in a manner having the effect or intended or likely to have the effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition) in that, in assessing the cost of accepting a tender from an external contractor, it took account of certain fixed overhead costs.

Homelessness

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for discontinuation of the leasing by borough or district councils of private houses for temporary accommodation for homeless persons; what consultation he has had with boroughs principally affected; and what study he has made concerning the effects of implementing his proposal.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to the reply, 18 December 1990, column 114-15]:* The housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1991-92 have been made today. They cover the assumptions the Government will make about rents and management and maintenance and other rules governing the calculation of each authority's subsidy entitlement. I am placing copies of the determinations in the Library.

The determinations also confirm, with modifications, the new rules for subsidy on short-term leasing that were proposed in October. Local authorities have increasingly taken private houses and flats on short-term leases to provide temporary refuge for the homeless. The Government had not proposed to discontinue this. On the contrary, I want to ensure that the rules regulating councils' entitlement to subsidy on this activity leave them with the flexibility they need, and I have therefore had extensive consultations with local authorities and their representatives. In response to their views, I have had a fresh look at the rules proposed in October and am today announcing two modifications.

The first is a proposal designed to help those authorities which are worried by the numbers of short-term leases approaching the end of their terms. To assist them with renewal or replacement, the rent they pay from 1 April next would be subsidisable up to a cash limit for each authority. The total national cost would be up to £25 million, to be found by a transfer from the estate action programme. I am putting this forward today as a proposal for consultation, and my Department is inviting responses from authorities by 19 January.

The second modification (on which we have already consulted) recognises that short-term leases are not necessarily appropriate in the permanent housing account. They may be used for the same purpose as licensed accommodation and bed-and-breakfast provision, both of which are financed from the general fund with underlying assistance from revenue support grant. The Department is prepared to give authorities special directions to take named leases outside the housing account, and we are today telling authorities of the criteria that must be met if they wish to apply. Leases taken outside the housing account will benefit from the same rent rebate subsidy arrangements as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will be introducing for rebates for tenants in bed-and-breakfast or licensed accommodation.

On the subsidy allowances for management and maintenance expenditure, we are introducing a system that targets allowances on those authorities with the greatest problems in maintaining their estates. I have decided to introduce this targeting slightly more quickly than was proposed in October, through a larger redistribution of resources from authorities with the least needs to those in greatest need. As a result, about 40 rather than 20 authorities will receive higher increases in allowances. Overall the level of allowances will be increased in order to maintain them at this year's levels in real terms.

For rent guidelines, my right hon. Friend confirms the proposals for an average rent increase of 2 per cent. above the allowance for inflation. This means an average increase of £1·85 over the guideline rents which applied this year ranging from £1·38 to £2·50 in individual councils. It is for each council to determine its actual rent level and how much to spend on management and maintenance of stock.

My right hon. Friend also confirms the proposal to reduce the allowance for the rent lost on empty properties to a flat rate of 2 per cent. of dwellings.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards single, homeless people.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer given yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Dykes), *Official Report*, vol. 183, column *119*.

Hostel Beds

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new hostel beds have come into existence as a result of measures announced on 22 June.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given yesterday by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Dykes) *Official Report*, vol. 183, column *119*.

TRANSPORT

Airports

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now announce the 1991-92 supplementary credit approvals for public airport companies and local authority airports.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State noted in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Amos) on 26 November at column 270, that supplementary credit approvals totalling £87 million will be available for public airport companies and local authority airports for 1991-92. Taken with other resources which public airport companies expect to invest, the total will assist the airports concerned to provide facilities which they estimate could cost some £179 million in 1991-92.

At this stage, we have agreed supplementary credit approvals totalling £70 million. The remainder will be issued as the year progresses. Major projects concerned include the continuation of work on phase 1 of terminal 2 at Manchester airport and joint venture projects with the private sector at Birmingham airport. Formal supplementary credit approvals for these and other projects will be issued to the local authorities shortly.

The £87 million total of borrowing approvals for 1991-92 represents the second successive large increase, from £29 million in 1989-90 and £59 million in 1990-91. But these increases reflect the investment profile for phase 1 of Manchester airport's second terminal. Supplementary credit approvals will reduce substantially in the next two years and beyond, as that project is completed, and as the pressure on public sector spending continues.

Local authority airports need to expand to meet a growing share of the demand for air travel, but to do so they will have to look increasingly to the private sector to take a stake in the success and the risk associated with particular projects.

Fire Extinguishers (Solvent Abuse)

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many reported incidents have there been of people using British Rail fire extinguishers for solvent abuse for each of the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: Her Majesty's railway inspectorate has no records of such incidents, which are not reportable by railway operators unless they result in personal injury or fatality on railway premises.

Hazardous Substances (Transportation)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the enforcement procedures adopted by his Department relating to the transportation of *(a)* inflammable and *(b)* hazardous material by road.

Mr. Chope: Enforcement of the dangerous goods regulations is carried out by the Health and Safety Executive with the assistance of the police and the Department's traffic examiners. The main thrust of the Health and Safety Executive's inspection and enforcement policy is to consider and assess compliance during visits to employers and duty holders' premises. These visits are supplemented by roadside checks.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current standards and regulations which apply to the transportation of *(a)* inflammable and *(b)* hazardous material by road.

Mr. Chope: The regulations, which cover all dangerous goods, are:

The Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981.
The Classification, Packaging and Labelling of Dangerous Substances Regulations 1984.
The Road Traffic (Carriage of Dangerous Substances in Packages etc) Regulations 1986.
The Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations 1989.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will establish a national accident database for accidents involving the road transportation of hazardous and inflammable materials; how many such accidents have taken place within a 30-mile radius of Southampton in the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Health and Safety Executive maintains a database which contains information on those incidents reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations. The numbers reported in HSE's area south, which covers Hampshire, Dorset, Berkshire and the Isle of Wight were:

	Number
1987-88	9
1988-89	12
1989-90	[1]14

[1] Provisional.

Expressways

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the schemes which are expressways as defined under the European agreement on main international traffic arteries.

Mr. Chope: The European agreement on main international traffic arteries defines three types of road: motorways, express roads and ordinary roads. The concept of the express road is not contained in English domestic law, but, in practice, there is no distinction between motorways and express roads as defined in the agreement.

Fengate Industrial Estate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive report of March 1989 into the Fengate industrial estate in Peterborough have been implemented; what additional resources have been made available to the Health and Safety Executive to undertake this matter; what additional arrangements have been made for the transportation of explosives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations were made in July 1989. These regulations

and the recommendations in the report are being reviewed by the Health and Safety Commission with industry and the fire services.

The resource needs of the HSE are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Bus Lanes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in descending order the London boroughs by proportion of highway in each borough with bus lanes.

Mr. Freeman: The available information is given in the table. Boroughs in which there are no bus lanes are not listed.

Bus lanes in London boroughs: 1990

	Length of bus lanes (km)	*Metres of bus lane per km of road*
Camden	7·7	28
Islington	6·1	27
Lambeth	9·0	27
Southwark	6·5	19
Westminster	5·8	17
Hackney	4·3	17
Wandsworth	4·3	11
Tower Hamlets	2·4	11
Newham	3·0	8
Kensington and Chelsea	1·4	8
Haringey	2·4	7
Hammersmith and Fulham	1·5	7
Lewisham	2·5	6
Enfield	2·6	5
Richmond upon Thames	1·8	5
Croydon	2·5	4
Barking and Dagenham	1·0	3
Ealing	1·8	3
Waltham Forest	1·2	3
Barnet	1·7	2
Merton	0·6	2
Greenwich	0·6	1
Brent	0·6	1
Harrow	0·5	1
Hounslow	0·4	1
Redbridge	0·3	—
Kingston upon Thames	0·1	—
Bromley	0·2	—

Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to encourage the use of low-energy light bulbs in his Department's offices and other buildings.

Mr. McLoughlin: Guidance on the use of low-energy light fittings has been issued throughout this Department and has already been applied in a number of its buildings.

Wembley Stadium (Underpass)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department next intends to meet officials from Wembley stadium to discuss the safety of the pedestrian underpass to the underground station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Department of Transport has no immediate plans to meet officials from Wembley statium. Several meetings have been held. The underpass is the responsibility of the London borough of Brent. We have provided in the 1991-92 local roads capital expenditure settlement, announced on 17 December, supplementary credit approval to enable the borough to fund a scheme to improve the underpass. I understand that Wembly plc is willing to contribute to the cost.

Severn River Crossing

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish the concession agreement recently signed in London on 29 October by the Minister for Public Transport and senior representatives of Laing, G. T. M. Entropeae, Barclay de Zoete Wedd, the Bank of America, and the shareholders of Severn River Crossing plc.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* Copies of the concession agreement between my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and Severn River Crossing plc concerning the provision of the second Severn bridge have today been placed in the House Library. Copies are also being made available to the appropriate local authorities.

THE ARTS

Public Libraries

Mr. Alton: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) how he implements his superintendent powers over public libraries;

(2) how he ensures the efficient operation of each public library authority as required by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Mr. Renton: Statistics published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy which provide information on the public library service in England are monitored by my office, which collects supplementary information direct from the local authorities. I investigate any complaints about public library authorities through my professional library adviser. It is for the district auditor to satisfy himself that arrangements are in place within local authorities to secure value for money.

In furtherance of my responsibilities to promote the improvement of the library service, I have produced two management tools on costing systems and performance indicators. A third, on objectives, will be published next year. In addition, I have awarded grants totalling £603,549 for 30 projects under my public library development incentive scheme. I also support research into public library provision leading to the publication of case studies and examples of good practice.

Items in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Allason: To ask the Minister for the Arts if there have been any items accepted in lieu of tax or allocated since an announcement was last made on the subject to the House.

Mr. Renton: Since the announcement made on 15 November at column 188, I am pleased to announce that a further offer has been accepted in principle. The offer is of a Sevres dinner service of some 350 pieces and a Louis

XV bas d'armoire by Bernard Van Risenburgh and will satisfy £1·4 million tax. The acceptance of this offer will be made possible by a call on the reserve.

Regional Arts Boards

Mr. Cash: To ask the Minister for the Arts what progress is being made in establishing regional arts boards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made earlier today.

CIVIL SERVICE

Correspondence

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he expects to be able to announce the result of the Cabinet Office Efficiency Unit's inquiry into the handling of ministerial correspondence with hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: With the approval of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the report of the efficiency scrutiny on ministerial correspondence is being made available to Members of Parliament and others today. Copies may be obtained from the Vote Office.

An efficiency scrutiny was set up in July to review the methods and costs of handling ministerial correspondence, to identify good methods of operation and to make recommendations for adoption by all Departments. In carrying out its work, the scrutiny team sought the views of Members of Parliament, Ministers and officials in Departments and members of the public.

The task of Government Departments in dealing with correspondence is a very substantial one. Ministers respond to nearly 250,000 letters a year from Members of Parliament, and many more letters from the public receive official replies. The nature and volume of correspondence varies a great deal from Department to Department. Some have a heavy case load of letters which require detailed investigation of a constituent's case before a reply can be sent. A topical issue can stimulate with little warning huge influxes of letters with which Departments do not have the resources to deal and these add to the work load of Ministers and civil servants who are already busy preparing or implementing a policy. The scrutiny estimates that the cost of dealing with ministerial correspondence is of the order of £17·5 million per annum.

Because Departments differ both in their organisation and in the nature and volume of their correspondence, the scrutiny does not recommend a single formula for dealing with letters, nor does it propose that uniform targets should be set, independently of the nature of each Departments' work, for the time taken to reply. The recommendations are essentially a menu of good practice, on which Departments will draw according to their particular circumstances. On this basis, the Government accept the report, which Departments will now consider with the aim of further improving their service to Members and their constituents, while making efficient use of available resources and providing better value for money.

While recognising that Members of Parliament always have, and retain, the right of approaching Ministers directly, the report recommends that one important way of achieving a more efficient service is through greater decentralisation of correspondence on operational matters to agency chief executives and local offices, who have delegated responsibility for particular areas of work and can deal with Members' inquiries on day-to-day matters quickly and efficiently. The Government accept the recommendation that Members need better information on contact points, and proposes to extend future editions of the "List of Ministerial Responsibilities" to include agency chief executives and other key addresses.

Other recommendations are designed to improve the way in which Departments manage correspondence and monitor their performance. They encourage more effective use of targets, and aim to increase Departments' awareness of the costs in dealing with correspondence, cutting out such factors as multiple handling and unnecessary retyping which add to costs and delay without improving the quality of replies. A need for more effective use of information technology is also identified. The report recommends that Departments consider making greater use of briefing notes for Members of Parliament to use in response to correspondence campaigns, and on other occasions when a large volume of letters is received on a single subject.

Each Department will produce within three months an action plan for responding to the report.

Non-departmental Bodies

Sir Philip Goodhart: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service how many non-departmental bodies are currently in existence; and when the annual list of such bodies will be published.

Mr. Renton: On 1 April 1990, there were 1,539 public bodies. That is 16 fewer than last year and 628 fewer than in 1979. These bodies are listed in "Public Bodies 1990", published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

In the year to 31 March 1990, 67 bodies were abolished and 51 new bodies set up.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing Productivity

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the United Kingdom manufacturing productivity figures for 1979, and the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Data on United Kingdom manufacturing productivity can be obtained from the CSO database, which is accessible from the House of Commons Library.

Public Sector (Manning)

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to reduce manning in the public sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Future plans for manpower in the civil service and the armed forces were published in table 21.3.11 of chapter 21 of the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1021). The Government do not plan manpower in local authorities or public corporations, but outturn data for the whole of the public sector for the period 1978-79 to 1988-89 were provided in appendix D of

the same chapter. Over that period, public sector manpower fell from 6,565,000 to 5,361,000, a reduction of 18·3 per cent.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the latest year for which figures are available what is the total *(a)* capital spending and *(b)* revenue spending for (i) local authorities, (ii) Government Departments and (iii) other bodies included in the public expenditure totals.

Mr. Mellor: The latest analyses of public expenditure by economic category were published in the "Supplementary Analyses" chapter (chapter 21) of the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1021). Tables 21.3.5 and 21.4.7 give details of the components of current expenditure (pay, other expenditure on goods and services, subsidies and grants) and capital expenditure (net expenditure on assets, grants and lending and other financial transactions) for central Government's own expenditure and expenditure by local authorities respectively. Similar analyses of the other components of the public expenditure planning total are given in tables 21.4.1 (central Government support for local authorities), 21.5.5 (nationalised industries) and 21.5.12 (other public corporations). Updates of this information will be published in the statistical supplement to the autumn statement, the successor to the "Supplementary Analyses" chapter of the public expenditure White Paper, early in 1991.

Friendly Societies

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is being made on implementing the proposals in the Green Paper entitled "Friendly Societies: A New Framework".

Mr. Maples: Preparations for the proposed legislation are well in hand. The bulk of the instructions to counsel have been drafted and are today being sent to the Friendly Societies Liaison Committee and other interested parties for consultation. We also plan to consult on the draft clauses when they are available. A Bill will be brought forward in a future Session, when the parliamentary timetable permits.

The draft instructions reflect a number of modifications to the proposals in the Green Paper, in the light of the responses received. Most are technical, but the main policy changes are:

(1) the proposed legislation will not include a statutory requirement for friendly societies to stand behind their subsidiaries, but it will include a power for them to meet the liabilities of a subsidiary;

(2) the voting requirements for a decision to set up subsidiaries will be significantly modified. Only a special resolution of the society will be needed, but there will be provisions to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to inform members of the vote in good time beforehand;

(3) there will be no statutory limit on the proportion of its funds a society can invest in its subsidiaries. But there will be provisions to ensure that the financing of subsidiaries is transparent to members and to the regulator and does not deplete the insurance funds below a prescribed margin of solvency;

(4) there will be a more flexible approach to solvency requirements, with different requirements for different classes of society according to the nature of their activities and powers of investment.

The legislation will also contain enhanced prudential powers for the regulator to intervene where the interests of members are at risk. In preparing the instructions to counsel, we have concluded that it would be more appropriate for these and other prudential powers to be vested in a commission rather than the Chief Registrar, and will be consulting the friendly societies on that proposal.

HMSO

Mr. Lord: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial target he has set Her Majesty's Stationery Office for 1991.

Mr. Maples: I have today laid a further Treasury minute setting HMSO the financial target for 1991 of achieving a profit after interest in current cost accounting terms of £4 million. This compares with the target for 1990 of a profit after interest in current cost accounting terms of £2·9 million.

Mrs. V. Chinnock

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what further information his Department is seeking from the senior medical officer of the civil service occupational health service in relation to the benefit payable to Mrs. V. Chinnock of Merle Dene, Hunsdon road, Ivybridge, Devon, as a result of the injuries sustained by her husband in the royal dockyard in 1975; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he expects to finalise the award granted under the injury benefit provisions of the principal civil service pension scheme to Mrs. V. Chinnock of Merle Dene, Hunsdon road, Ivybridge, Devon, as a result of the injuries sustained by her husband in the royal dockyard in 1975;

(3) when payment will begin of the benefit due to Mrs. V. Chinnock of Merle Dene, Hunsdon road, Ivybridge, Devon, as a result of the injuries sustained by her husband in the royal dockyard in 1975;

(4) whether his pensions office has assessed the amount of benefit payable to Mrs. V. Chinnock of Merle Dene, Hunsdon road, Ivybridge, Devon, as set out in his letter of 22 August to the hon. Member for South Hams.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement explained in his letter of 22 August, Mrs. Chinnock's claim to an injury benefit award has been accepted. The award has now been finalised and will be put into payment very shortly, together with arrears due to her since her husband's death.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost to the Exchequer of allowing mortgage interest relief at the higher rate of income tax.

Mr. Maude: The cost of mortgage interest relief at a rate in excess of the basic rate of income tax in 1990-91 is provisionally estimated at £520 million. This estimate is based on the assumption that interest rates remain at their current levels.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of mortgage interest relief during 1988-89.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* The total value of mortgage interest relief in 1988-89 is estimated as £5,400 million.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show the total value of mortgage interest relief during 1989-90 by economic planning region.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* Broad estimates, based on the regional distribution of mortgage interest relief recorded in the family expenditure survey for 1988 and 1989, are as follows:

Mortgage interest relief 1989-90

	£ million
Northern	320
Yorkshire and Humberside	470
North West	680
East Midlands	430
West Midlands	550
East Anglia	280
Greater London	1,000
Other South East	1,730
South West	660
Wales	230
Scotland	470
Northern Ireland	80
United Kingdom	6,900

Charities

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and other registered charities will remain zero-rated for VAT.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Charities as such are not zero-rated, but they benefit from various VAT reliefs on certain supplies they make and on certain goods and services they buy in, which are zero-rated by virtue of their intended use. The Government oppose any proposals for the single market which would further restrict the United Kingdom's ability to use zero rates. EC decisions in tax matters require the unanimous agreement of member states, and there is no question of any unwelcome proposals being forced upon us.

Alcohol (Duty)

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the rates of duty are per centilitre of alcohol for *(a)* beer, *(b)* wine and *(c)* spirits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The excise duty per centilitre of pure alcohol would be about 10·2p for a typical beer or table wine, and 17·35p for spirits.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the yield to the Exchequer would be if the rate of duty for beer and wine were increased to that of spirits; by how much the price of a pint of beer and a bottle of wine would rise; and what would be the effect on the retail price index.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The extra yield to the Exchequer if the rate of duty per unit of alcohol on beer and wine were increased to that of spirits would be £1½ billion in 1991-92. The price of a typical pint of beer and a 75 cl bottle of table wine would rise by about 18p and 69p respectively. The impact effect on the retail price index would be to raise it by around 1 per cent. in total.

Income Tax

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the threshold for the payment of higher rate income tax would be if it were restored to its 1988 level in real terms; and what the cost to the Exchequer would be of so restoring it.

Mr. Maude: It is estimated that the basic rate limit for 1990-91 would be £22,900 of taxable income it if were set at its 1988-89 level after allowing for the movement in the retail prices index between the two financial years. The direct revenue cost would be about £500 million in a full year.

Third-world Debt

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax write-off British banks have been allowed against expected non-repayment of third-world debt.

Mr. Maude: Estimates of the reduction in mainstream corporation tax receipts for provisions on doubtful sovereign debt are negligible for the years to 1985-86 inclusive, about £70 million for 1986-87, about £¼ billion for 1987-88, over £½ billion for 1988-89 and about £⅓ billion for 1989-90.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Governors and Managers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the reasons for his decision not to give to his Department responsibility for providing advice to governors and managers.

Mr. Fallon: The Department has produced and supported a number of publications and training materials to help school governors, including a loose-leaf handbook supplied to all governors giving information about their responsibilities. Local education authorities also need to provide detailed information and training for governors, as required by the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. The Department encourages their efforts through the grants for education support and training programme, which will cover some £24 million of expenditure on governor support in the four years to 1993.

School Libraries

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the latest available information on the resourcing of school libraries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Latest outturn data on local authority recurrent spending are from 1988-89. They do not separately identify total spending on school libraries. In that year spending on library books and on non-printed library materials was included within the £331 million of spending on books, equipment and materials in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England. Spending on school librarians was included within the £304 million of spending on school support staff.

National Association of Governors and Managers

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what funding has been made available to the National Association of Governors and Managers by his Department; and if it is his intention to provide a secretariat for the National Association of Governors and Managers.

Mr. Fallon: The Department contributed £8,000 per annum in 1988-89 and 1989-90 towards the cost of improving NAGM's administration; up to £40,000 is available in the current year in support of longer-term restructuring to enable NAGM to become an effective national organisation. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider any further proposals which are based on a sound business plan designed to move the association as quickly as possible towards self-sufficiency.

Key Stage 4

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received *(a)* for and *(b)* against key stage 4 of the national curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None. It is not a question of being for or against key stage 4, but how all the objectives of the national curriculum for 14 to 16-year-old pupils can best be met within the study time available.

School Budgets

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the most recent estimate of the proportion of the potential school budget being delegated to schools in each local education authority in *(a)* inner London and *(b)* outer London.

Mr. Fallon: Figures are as follows, taken from budget statements for 1990-91 published by local education authorities under section 42 of the Education Reform Act. The figures are applicable only for authorities with statutory schemes for the local management of schools. There are no figures for four outer London boroughs; three of these do not as yet have statutory LMS schemes in force (Croydon, Hillingdon and Newham). Waltham Forest has not yet published its section 42 budget statement. Westminster is currently the only inner London LEA with a statutory LMS scheme.

LEA	*Proportion of the PSB[1] delegated to schools*
Barnet	84·36
Havering	83·87
Brent	83·63
Sutton	83·44
Redbridge	82·71
Ealing	81·66
Hounslow	81·59
Harrow	81·52
Enfield	81·50
Bexley	81·33
Bromley	80·70
Richmond	79·98
Merton	79·79
Haringey	79·36
Kingston	78·46
Barking	77·98
Westminster	77·97

[1] PSB = General Schools Budget minus mandatory exceptions, school meals, home to school transport, and transitional exceptions.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he intends to give to local authorities about the supply of irradiated food in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: No specific guidance on the use of irradiated food in schools is being issued. In common with all other catering establishments, local education authorities which choose to use irradiated products will be required so to inform consumers under the Food Labelling (Amendment) (Irradiated Food) Regulations 1990.

Agencies

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has identified any candidates within his Department for agency status under the "next steps" initiative.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following a detailed feasibility study, I have identified pensions branch within my Department, located in Darlington, as a candidate for agency status.

Agency status should enable pensions branch to operate with greater freedom and clearer responsibility towards specified targets and performance measures within an agreed framework of resources. It should increase the accountability of the managers within the branch and lead to improvements in the quality as well as the cost-effectiveness of the service provided to teachers and their employers.

I have set in hand the recruitment through open competition of a new head of pensions branch, who will be appointed as the chief executive designate.

A "next steps" unit has been set up within my Department to co-ordinate further work on the project, and the preparation of a draft agency document has been put in hand. If the final decision is that this part of my Department should become an agency, the aim would be to establish it not later than early 1992.

Universities and Polytechnics

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the level of funding for universities and polytechnics in 1979 and 1989, respectively *(a)* as a percentage of gross domestic product, *(b)* in real terms and *(c)* in terms of resources per student at constant prices, together with the numbers of students, other than from overseas.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* Consistent information in the form requested is not available for years prior to 1980-81. Public funding of universities in Great Britain from recurrent grant and home and EC student tuition fees and local authority expenditure on higher education (net of estimated overseas student fees and miscellaneous other income) in England have increased from £2,821 million in financial year 1980-81 to £2,968 million in 1988-89, both at 1989-90 prices, 0·7 per cent. and 0·6 per cent. of GDP respectively. Over that period, full-time equivalent home and EC student numbers increased from 469,200 to 578,900 and funding per student reflected efficiency gains by decreasing from £6,012 to £5,127, again at 1989-90 prices.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fireworks

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make inquiries of those European countries which have national training schemes for organisers of public firework displays with a view to setting up such a scheme in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Leigh: To require organisers of public firework displays to be formally trained would discourage many smaller local displays which I want to encourage the public to attend on safety grounds. However, a large manufacturer of fireworks already offers a voluntary training scheme, which I would encourage organisers to attend.

Mr. Summerson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ensure that category 3 and 4 fireworks can be bought only from licensed outlets.

Mr. Leigh: By voluntary agreement, category 4 fireworks are not sold through retail outlets. Also, my Department has asked the industry not to sell through retail outlets those category 3 fireworks which require a safe distance of a full 25 m because they are likely to be too powerful for the average back garden.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will make a statement on the operation of the 1975 fireworks code; and if he has any plans to strengthen the voluntary agreement not to sell fireworks until three weeks before 5 November.

Mr. Leigh: I am satisfied on the basis of the recent decline in the number of firework accidents that the existing fireworks code and the voluntary agreement on the period of retail sale of fireworks are proving to be adequate.

Emergency Planning

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many civil servants are currently employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time by his Department on (i) home defence planning, (ii) emergency planning, (iii) liaison with the NATO central supplies agency and (iv) work connected with the NATO industrial planning committee.

Mr. Leigh: This work is shared between a group of seven staff in my Department. Three of these are also engaged on other duties and one works part time, making a total equivalent of five full-time staff.

Much of the work of the NATO industrial planning committee concerns planning for the establishment and operation of the Central Supplies Agency, which would become operational only in times of crisis and war. The amount of staff time allocated to each subject varies with the work load, but currently it is approximately as follows:

	Percentage
Home Defence Planning	25
Civil Emergency Planning	35
Work connected with the NATO Industrial Planning Committee and the establishment and operation of the Central Supplies Agency	40

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the estimated cost in the current financial year and in 1991-92 of the programme of sectoral studies announced by his Department at the workshop on local authority essential needs in crisis and war, held on 4 September.

Mr. Leigh: In this financial year we estimate spending £65,000 on the programme of sectoral studies. In view of the consistency of the findings of the studies completed so far, we concluded that doing further studies would not be worth while so we terminated the programme. Therefore, there will be no expenditure on the programme in 1991-92.

Credit (Marketing)

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to improve standards in the marketing of credit.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have over an extended period made known their view that there is a need for an improvement in credit marketing practices. They welcome the statements about the marketing and provision of credit in the draft code of banking practice and, in particular, the statement that banks and building societies will act responsibly and prudently in the marketing and advertising of credit. However, a code which applies only to banks and building societies cannot be a complete answer to the problem of irresponsible practices in the credit market. The consultation paper on the draft code acknowledges this.

The Government have concluded that there is a need to tighten the legislation on consumer credit. The Department of Trade and Industry is today issuing a consultative document which gives details of proposals for new regulations under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 and also for amending the Act itself. It is proposed to make four new sets of regulations under the Act.

First, the Consumer Credit (Advertisements) Regulations 1989 are to be amended. The main changes will be to require advertisers to provide additional information in particular about the affordability of credit and the risks of variable interest rate agreements. In addition, advertisements for residential property loans which mention the availability of certain related services from or through the lender will need to include a statement that loans are available whether or not the related services are taken from or through the lender.

Secondly, the Consumer Credit (Agreements) Regulations 1983 are to be amended. It is proposed that, with certain exceptions, regulated credit agreements will in future have to include the statement "Do not sign this agreement unless you are sure that you can afford the payments". In addition, advertisements for secured loans and foreign currency loans will have to include warnings about the special risks entailed in this type of borrowing.

Thirdly, new regulations on the conduct of consumer credit business will require businesses licensed under the Consumer Credit Act to take precautions in the direct mailing of credit circulars to reduce the risk of such circulars going to minors or to people who do not wish to receive them. In addition, there will be a ban on making unsolicited increases in credit limits.

The conduct of business regulations will also prohibit the use by licensed consumer credit businesses of negative options (and other techniques which rely on consumer

inertia) to sell credit-related services. The decision to legislate on inertia selling was taken only after careful consideration of the proposals by the finance and insurance industries for a code of practice on the use of negative options to sell payment protection insurance. Whilst the code would have gone a considerable way to guard against the risk of consumers being induced to buy insurance which they did not really want, the Government consider it to be a matter of principle that consumers should not be charged for services which they have not positively and expressly requested.

Fourthly, a new regulation on pre-agreement disclosure of information will require lenders under regulated credit agreements which are secured on property to explain to prospective borrowers the commitment entailed in variable interest rates.

In addition to making these regulations, the Government intend, as soon as legislative time is available, to introduce a Bill to improve the protection provided by provisions in the Consumer Credit Act 1974 on sending credit circulars to minors and on cancellation rights as well as making the important deregulatory changes announced in the White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" in November 1988.

Section 50 of the Act, which prohibits the sending of unsolicited credit circulars to minors, is to be made more effective. There have been a number of complaints from parents whose children have received credit circulars. Lenders and intermediaries who breach the prohibition can shelter behind the defence which section 50(2) provides for a person who has sent a circular to a minor if he can prove that he

"did not know and had no reasonable cause to suspect"

that the person to whom he sent it was a minor. It is therefore proposed to remove this defence, but not the defence under section 168 that the person who sent the circular to a minor

"took all reasonable precautions and exercised all due diligence to avoid such an act".

The effect of removing the section 50(2) defence would therefore be to require those issuing credit circulars to take reasonable precautions and exercise due diligence.

It is also proposed to extend the cancellation rights provided by section 67 and 68 to cover debtor-creditor-supplier agreements (as defined in section 12 of the Act) if they are signed on trade premises following face-to-face negotiations. The aim of this proposal is to allow consumers the right to cancel credit agreements which they may have entered into on impulse without giving sufficient thought as to their ability to make the repayments. In order to reduce the inconvenience which may be caused by the unwillingness of traders to allow consumers to have goods or services before the end of the cooling-off period, the cooling-off period for this new category of cancellable agreements will be only two days rather than the five days which applies to other cancellable agreements.

The 1988 White Paper "Releasing Enterprise" proposed that protection against extortionate credit bargains should be strengthened by allowing a court to reopen a credit agreement of its own motion. It remains the Government's intention to amend the Act in this way. In addition, the Director General of Fair Trading has been asked to report on whether there is a need for any other reforms of the Act's provisions on extortionate credit agreements.

Copies of the consultative document have been placed in the Library, and also copies will be available from the Vote Office.

Northern Ireland Railways Ltd.

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Monopolies Commission report on Northern Ireland Railways Ltd. will be published.

Mr. Redwood: The report is published today. The commission found that Northern Ireland Railways was not pursuing any course of conduct which operated against the public interest.

The commission recognised the dedication and resilience of Northern Ireland Railways' management team in maintaining services despite terrorism and hooliganism. While concluding that there was scope for improving efficiency and reducing costs it was impressed by the company's forward-looking investment programme and its lack of complacency in facing competition. The commission identified a number of areas where improvement was possible, in particular:

(i) a reduction in the management structure, and changes in reporting relationships and board composition

(ii) abandonment of passenger sectorisation

(iii) strengthening of the company's human resource management.

The commission has also recommended improvements in such areas as the setting and monitoring of financial and operating objectives, working practices and a simplified payment system, personnel and training administration, corporate planning, investment appraisal, maintenance of rolling stock and infrastructure, research into matching supply and demand, and the company's relationship with its holding company, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and with the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland).

That Department, in consultation with Northern Ireland Railways and the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, will be producing a preliminary response to the Commission's findings within three to four months, in the light of which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will make a statement.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which accountancy bodies have applied under the Companies Act 1989 for recognition as a supervisory body.

Mr. Redwood: The following bodies have applied for recognition:

(i) The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales,
(ii) The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland,
(iii) The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland,
(iv) The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants,
(v) The Association of Authorised Public Accountants.

The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants has also applied for recognition of its professional qualification. As I announced in my reply of 30 October,

at column 435, the Institutes of Chartered Accountants have already applied for recognition of their professional qualification.

I have placed a copy of each application in the Library of the House. Certain material submitted in confidence has been excluded from the copy placed in the Library.

Product Liability

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what inquiries have been received from the European Commission concerning the implementation by the United Kingdom of the 1985 EC product liability directive; what replies have been sent by his Department; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 13 December 1990]:* The EC Commission issued a reasoned opinion in July 1990 under article 169 of the EC treaty, setting out its concern over the way in which the United Kingdom has implemented the EC directive on product liability in part I of the Consumer Protection Act 1987. A full reply was sent in October 1990, and it is now for the Commission to decide whether to pursue the matter further.

By mutual agreement, the Commission and all member states treat proceedings under article 169 as confidential. I am therefore afraid that I am unable to make available the details of the correspondence.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State and Industry if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* The information is as follows:

Opinion survey	*Date held*
Public attitudes to biotechnology	August 1987
Awareness of single European internal market	April 1988
Attitudes to the labelling of fur products	May 1988
Attitudes of adults to the use of fireworks by themselves and children	October 1990

Internal Market Council

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the outcome of the Internal Market Council on 13 December.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* I attended the Internal Market Council on 13 December, the last of the Italian presidency. A number of important measures were agreed.

In particular, a common position was reached on the computer software directive, which will require member states to give copyright protection to computer programs. The compromise reached on reverse engineering (the term used to describe the process of finding out how a program works) provides that such processes will be allowed subject to certain conditions. This should make it possible to connect all components of a computer system, including those of different manufacturers, so that they can work together.

In addition, there was political agreement on the weapons directive, which deals with the acquisition and possession of weapons (a formal adoption of a common position is likely before the end of the year); and agreement to a regulation to discourage the diversion of precursor chemicals to illicit manufacture of drugs.

Common positions were also reached on two amendments to the directive on certain dangerous substances, restricting the marketing and use of cadmium (10th amendment) and ugilec 121 and 141 and DBBT (11th amendment). Subject only to a technical German reserve, a common position was also reached on an amendment to the machinery directive in order to include mobile lifting machinery.

A total of six single market measures were agreed without further discussion, including a common position on the directive relating to spray suppression devices, and on the regulation allowing the use of TIR and ATA carnets as transit documents. The decision setting out mandatory testing and certification provisions within further Community technical harmonisation directives was also finally adopted.

There was further discussion without agreement on a number of issues, notably the directive on the irradiation of food. No real progress was made, but the subject will be discussed again at future Councils.

Internal Market Ministers discussed the Commission's report, required under article 8b of the treaty of Rome, on the progress made towards the completion of the internal market.

The Commission also made a report on the importance for the single market of trans-European networks in telecommunications, transport, energy and training. A full debate is expected at February's Internal Market Council.

Client Accounts

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will discuss with the Securities and Investments Board the maintenance of registers of client accounts and approved auditors for client accounts.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* This is a matter for the Securities and Investments Board. However, I understand that self-regulating organisations and recognised professional bodies hold details of the auditors of authorised firms and of firms authorised to hold client money.

Levitt Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any companies in the Levitt Group were at any time holders of licences to trade in securities issued by this Department, or had applied for such licences.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* No.

Cammell Laird

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps have been taken to ensure that the treatment of Cammell Laird shipyard conforms with the principles of the European Community's directive on aid to shipbuilding to ensure that the progress towards the full achievement of the internal market is carried out on an equal and equitable basis in respect of all Community yards.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* The general question of Cammell Laird's ineligibility for intervention fund was explored in depth with the European Commission by the former Minister of State for Industry in October. The hon. Member for Birkenhead sought and received, on 5 December 1990, at column 297, at commitment that a further approach would be made to the Commission in respect of specific orders for which Cammell Laird was competing and for which the company requested intervention fund support. The particular order for which the company was then bidding has subsequently been placed with another yard which offered a different specification. We await a suitable further order on which to base a further approach to the Commission.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in Amber Valley in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1981, *(c)* 1987 and *(d)* 1990.

Mr. Jackson: The most recent estimates of employment in parliamentary constituencies are from the September 1987 census of employment; the earliest are for September 1981. There were 29,300 employees in employment in the Amber Valley constituency in September 1981 and 34,300 in September 1987. The figures exclude the self-employed and members of HM forces.

European Year for Elderly People

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what decision was taken by the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 26 November in respect of a European Year for Elderly People.

Mr. Forth: The 26 November meeting of the Social Affairs Council agreed the proposal for a European Year of Elderly People.

Overseas Workers

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of those currently in the United Kingdom as overseas domestic workers have work permits; and from which year of issue these date.

Mr. Jackson *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* The information requested is not available.

Mr. Archer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many work permits for overseas workers have been issued in each year since 1970.

Mr. Jackson: The number of work permit approvals for each year since 1970 are as follows:

	Main scheme	*Training and work experience*	*Total*
1970	66,470	7,549	74,019
1971	56,031	6,399	62,430
1972	46,987	5,712	52,699
1973	32,839	3,697	36,536
1974	33,045	2,903	35,948
1975	30,078	3,136	33,214
1976	20,470	2,651	25,271
1977	18,414	3,164	21,578
1978	19,149	3,662	22,811
1979	17,993	4,010	22,003
1980	14,661	4,152	18,813
1981	12,772	3,088	15,860
1982	12,897	2,557	15,454
1983	13,546	2,361	15,907
1984	13,045	2,646	15,691
1985	13,638	2,937	16,575
1986	15,862	2,826	18,688
1987	17,448	2,900	20,348
1988	22,184	3,790	25,974
1989	25,502	4,228	29,730
[1]1990	28,384	4,608	32,392

[1] Figures to the end of November 1990.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Less-favoured Areas

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which parishes will benefit from the extension of the less-favoured areas in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Commission has now agreed to an extension to the less favoured areas in the United Kingdom. The agreed extension includes land in the following parishes in England, Wales and Scotland.

ENGLAND

Devon

Ashton, Black Torrington, Chudleigh, Drewsteignton, Doddiscombleigh, Dunsford, Dunchideock, East Anstey, East Buckland, Exbourne, Hatherleigh, Highampton, Jacobstowe, Kenn, North Molton, Romansleigh, Sampford Courtney, South Molton, Trusham, West Buckland.

Hereford and Worcester

Abbey Dore, Bacton, Dulas, Garway, Llancilo, Longtown, Orcop, Rowlstone, Walterstone.

Northumberland

Belsay, Brinkburn, Broomley and Stocksfield, Capheaton, Chollerton, Denwick, Ford, Haydon, Healey, Hedgeley, Kirkwhelpington, Matfen, Newton on the Moor, Shilbottle, Whittington.

North Yorkshire

Aysgarth, Azerley, Boltby, Burton-cum-Walden, Carperby-cum-Thoresby, Cloughton, East Hauxwell, East Whitton Town, Fylingdales, Hawsker-cum-Stainsacre, Hunton, Ingleton, Lockton, Middleham, Newbiggin, Stainton Dale, Thoralby, West Witton, Winksley.

Shropshire

Bucknell, Church Stretton, Clee St. Margaret, Clunbury, Diddlebury, Hope Bowdler, Hopton Cangeford, Hopton Castle, Neen Savage, Ruckley and Langley, Wheathill, Winstantow.

WALES

Clwyd

Abergele, Abergele Rural, Aberwheeler, Betws-yn-Rhos, Colwyn Bay, Llansannan.

Dyfed

Amroth, Bayvil, Begelly, Brawdy, Eglwyscummin, Jeffreston, Kidwelly Borough, Lampeter Velfrey,

Laugharne Township, Llanddawror, Llangynin, Lovestone, Ludchurch, Mounton, Narberth South, Reynalton, St. Ishmael.

Gwent

Brynmawr, Caerleon, Henllys, Llanddewi Sgyrrid, Llanfihangel Llantarnam, Llantilio Pertholey, Rogerston, Usk

Gwynedd

Buan, Caerhun, Caenarfon, Carreglefn, Conway Borough, Criccieth, Dolbenmaen, Gyffin, Heneglwys, Henryd, Llanbedr-y-Cennin, Llanddyfnan, Llandudno, Llanfachraeth, Llanfair-is-Gaer, Llanfairynghornwy, Llanfihangel-Tre'r-Beirdd, Llangadwaladr, Llangeinwen, Llangristiolus, Llangwyllog, Llanidan, Llaniestyn Rural, Llanllyfni, Llansantffraid Glan Conwy, Nefyn, Newborough, Pentir, Pentraeth, Pwllheli, Trefdraeth.

SCOTLAND

Borders

Bedrule, Cavers, Coldingham, Earlston, Jedburgh, Langton, Lauder, Legerwood, Oxnam.

Grampian

Aberdour, Birnie, Crimond, Deskford, Dyke, Elgin, Fraserburgh, Gamrie, King Edward, Kintore, Longside, Lonmay, Methlick, Old Deer, Peterhead, Pitsligo, Rathen, Spynie, St. Fergus, Tarves, Tyrie, Udny.

Lothian

Cranston, Garvald, Humbie, Spott, Stenton, Whittinghame, Yester.

Tayside

Abdie, Airlie, Ardoch, Arngask, Blackford, Blairgowrie, Cleish, Comrie, Crieff, Edzell, Fossoway, Fowlis Wester, Glamis, Kingoldrum, Kinnaird, Kinnoul, Lintrathen, Menmuir, Monzievaird, Newburgh, Orwell, Portmoack, Stracathro, Tannadice.

The extension in Northern Ireland covers land in the administrative counties of Antrim, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone.

Maps showing the revised areas are being prepared and a copy will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Salmonella

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if any cases of invasive salmonella have been found in consignments of imported eggs in the current year.

Mr. Gummer: The public health laboratory service is investigating consignments of imported eggs for the presence of invasive salmonella. In arrivals up to 8 November, they have identified invasive salmonella in 24 consignments of Dutch eggs, in two consignments of Belgian eggs and in one consignment each from France and Germany. One consignment of eggs from the Irish Republic was also found to be contaminated.

The number of isolations of invasive salmonella in eggs from our major overseas supplier (the Netherlands) is particularly worrying and I have taken this up with the Dutch Minister of Agriculture as a matter of urgency.

The Dutch veterinary services already have a monitoring and control programme for salmonella enteritidis in the breeding sector and those breeding flocks found to be infected are destroyed. In addition, a code of practice will be introduced shortly in the egg laying sector which will place particular emphasis on all aspects of hygiene. Following my approach, the Dutch Ministry will be discussing with egg producers additional safeguards that will offer protection to consumers both within the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. It is too early to say precisely what form these controls will take, but they will be developed in close co-operation with my chief veterinary officer.

Coffee (Decaffeination)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to introduce labelling of coffee for the different processes of decaffeination; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The labelling of coffee and coffee products is harmonised throughout the European Community; the harmonised rules provide for the use of the description "decaffeinated" but not for differentiation between different processes. Any additional provisions would have to be discussed at EC level; I have no plans to initiate any such discussions.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the safety of the different processes used to decaffeinate coffee; whether any of his committees have considered the matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Water, carbon dioxide, and dichloromethane are used to decaffeinate coffee. Both carbon dioxide and dichloromethane were considered by the Food Additives and Contaminants Committee in its review of solvents in 1978 and found to be suitable for use in food although further data on dichloromethane was requested.

These have subsequently been provided and both the Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food and the Environment (COT) and the European Commission's Scientific Committee for Food have approved its use providing residues do not exceed 5mg/kg.

Organic Produce

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of organic produce consumed in the United Kingdom is imported; and at what cost.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available.

Agricultural Chemicals

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the average time for processing applications for registration of agricultural chemicals in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: This information cannot be obtained, except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications for registration of agricultural chemicals were made, and how many registrations were granted, in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is set out below in respect of application for new agricultural

pesticides (active ingredients) submitted to the Ministry for approval by the six Departments responsible. Applications for which the Health and Safety Executive is primarily responsible (that is non-agricultural pesticides) are not included.

	1987	1988	1989	[1]1990
(a) Received	23	12	15	7
(b) Approved (Fully Provisionally)	11	2	3	6
(c) Only approved for experimental use	—	3	2	1
(d) Rejected Withdrawn	1	—	1	5

[1] As at 10/1.

Cattle (Records)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will outline the details required to be recorded by farmers in herd books as a result of the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marking and Breeding Records) Order 1990; whether he intends to introduce a new pro forma herd book; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has given to farmers about recording details of cattle as outlined in the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marking and Breeding Records) Order 1990; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what information has been given to his regional offices about the recording details for cattle as outlined in the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marking and Breeding Records) Order 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information which has to be recorded by farmers is set out in the schedule to the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marking and Breeding Records) Order 1990. Farmers will have to make their own arrangements to record this information.

Information about the requirements of the order was issued by press notice, a letter to trade organisations, including the farming unions, and through an animal health circular to all the Agriculture Departments' veterinary and technical staff.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has issued to local authorities concerning the implementation of the new regulations on food irradiation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Consideration of applications to preserve food by irradiation will be a matter for a national licensing authority. Where a licence to operate is granted, the authority will liaise as necessary with other enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with statutory provisions.

Spanish Abattoirs

Dame Janet Fookes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take urgent action to lay before the European Commission evidence sent to him by the RSPCA relating to breaches of the humane slaughter regulations in Spanish abattoirs.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission is already considering this matter and is aware of the evidence presented by the RSPCA, and the British Government will be raising it directly with the Commission at the earliest opportunity.

WALES

NHS Corporate Management Programme

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish an updated version of the national health service corporate management programme.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: "National Health Service Wales: Agenda for Action", the successor document to the corporate management programme, is being published today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many speech therapists per head of population are employed by *(a)* each health authority in Wales and *(b)* each county council in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The provision of speech therapy services is the responsibility of district health authorities under the National Health Service Act 1977. Information on speech therapists employed by health authorities in Wales which relates to whole-time equivalents in post at 30 September 1990, is given in the following table. No information is held centrally on the numbers (if any) of speech therapists employed directly by county councils.

Authority	WTE per 100,000 population
Ciwyd	7·2
Dyfed	6·4
Gwent	3·6
Gwynedd	4·7
Mid Glamorgan	3·4
Pembrokeshire	4·4
Powys	7·2
South Glamorgan	8·1
West Glamorgan	4·9

Inspectorate for Education

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated annual cost of Her Majesty's inspectorate for education in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is estimated that the cost of Her Majesty's inspectorate for education in Wales for 1990-91 will be £3·39 million.

Pupils (GCSE Results)

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of pupils sitting GCSE core and foundation subjects achieved grades of C and above in the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There is no examination by GCSE of the statutory requirements of the national curriculum at present. The national curriculum requirements for core subjects are scheduled to be examined for the first time at the end of key stage 4 in 1994, except for Welsh which will be first examined in schools where Welsh is currently taught in 1995, with foundation subjects following progressively between 1995 and 1997.

What follows are the percentages of pupils achieving a grade C or above in Welsh Joint Education Committee GCSE examinations in summer 1990.

	Percentage Grade A-C[1]
English	43·7
Mathematics	37·6
Welsh as a 1st language	47·1
Physics	47·4
Chemistry	48·6
Biology	42·2
Geography	44·3
History	45·9
French	55·8
Music	63·3
Art and Design	46·4
PE	37·8

[1] Includes an element of pupils aged 14 and 16. WJEC examinations account for approximately 95 per cent. of all GCSE entries in Wales. Technology is not examined as a single subject by the WJEC at present.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many bathing beaches in Wales have achieved a blue flag award; and what steps he is taking to ensure more beaches meet the same standards of cleanliness.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: One beach in Wales, Cefn Sidan, was awarded a blue flag in 1990. A major programme of investment is under way to bring bathing waters designated under EC directive 76/160/EEC up to standard and to implement the Government's decisions on levels of treatment to be given to discharges to coastal and estuarial waters. The cost in the United Kingdom of these programmes is estimated at £3·5 billion. It will be for local authorities or, in some cases, the owner, to capitalise on this and bring their beaches up to the requisite standards.

Vacant Accommodation

Mr. Gwilyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers and percentage of vacant council-owned accommodation for each of the district councils in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information is given in the following table:

Local Authority vacant dwellings at 1 April 1990

Welsh Districts	*Number*	[1] *Number as a percentage of local authority stock*
Aberconwy	23	0·9
Alyn and Deeside	56	1·1
Arfon	27	0·6
Blaenau Gwent	124	1·2
Brecknock	0	—
Cardiff	293	1·5
Carmarthen	3	0·1
Ceredigion	31	0·9
Colwyn	26	1·0
Cynon Valley	184	3·6
Delyn	47	1·0
Dinefwr	29	1·2
Dwyfor	6	0·4
Glyndwr	58	2·1
Islwyn	170	2·9
Llanelli	109	1·6
Lliw Valley	46	0·9
Meirionnydd	7	0·4
Merthyr Tydfil	106	1·6
Monmouth	74	1·6
Montgomeryshire	36	0·9
Neath	68	1·3
Newport	96	0·7
Ogwr	143	1·5
Port Talbot	291	5·1
Preseli Pembrokeshire	26	0·5
Radnorshire	9	0·8
Rhondda	83	1·7
Rhuddlan	28	1·1
Rhymney Valley	64	0·7
South Pembrokeshire	6	0·2
Swansea	134	0·8
Taff-Ely	125	1·8
Torfaen	169	1·3
Vale of Glamorgan	40	0·7
Wrexham Maelor	229	1·5
Ynys Mon	57	1·1
Wales Total	3,473	1·5

[1] Calculated using provisional stock estimates for 1 April 1990.

Homelessness

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the numbers of those legally defined as homeless for each district council in Wales; and if he will estimate the proportion of each who do not have a roof over their heads.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Data for the third quarter of 1990 on the number of cases accepted as homeless, or threatened with homelessness within 28 days, as described in part 3, section 58 of the Housing Act 1985, are given in the following table. The proportion of these cases who do not have a roof over their head is nil.

Cases accepted as homeless

Welsh districts	*Cases*
Aberconwy	9
Alyn and Deeside	51
Arfon	10
Blaenau Gwent	98
Brecknock	24
Cardiff	281
Carmarthen	18
Ceredigion	37
Colwyn	15
Cynon Valley	67
Delyn	67
Dinefwr	15
Dwyfor	13
Glyndwr	3
Islwyn	39
Llanelli	30
Lliw Valley	21
Meirionnydd	24
Merthyr Tydfil	55
Monmouth	26
Montgomeryshire	29
Neath	81
Newport	285
Ogwr	183
Port Talbot	25
Preseli Pembrokeshire	17

Welsh districts	Cases
Radnorshire	9
Rhondda	21
Rhuddlan	25
Rhymney Valley	41
South Pembrokeshire	25
Swansea	54
Taff-Ely	52
Torfaen	143
Vale of Glamorgan	115
Wrexham Maelor	137
Ynys Mon	14
Wales total	2,159

Home Ownership

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to extend home ownership in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In Wales, our right-to-buy policy has been extremely successful. In the last 10 years, well over 80,000 local authority dwellings have been sold and owner occupation has increased from 62 per cent. in 1981 to 71 per cent. earlier this year—higher than any other part of the United Kingdom.

Building on this, last year we introduced an experimental flexi-ownership scheme which enables tenants of the Development Board for Rural Wales to buy their homes at a weekly outlay broadly the same as their existing rent. I am very encouraged by the success of the scheme: 17 per cent. of eligible tenants have expressed an interest and 14 sales have already been completed which, at 2 per cent. of the eligible stock, is a little more than the initial take-up of right-to-buy. Within a few months, when current applications have been processed, I expect completed sales to total about 5 per cent. of the eligible stock. We are considering whether this scheme can be extended to other public sector tenants in Wales.

The Department will continue to work with local authorities to foster low-cost home ownership schemes, encouraging them especially to work with housing associations and the private sector to provide homes affordable by first time buyers. Housing for Wales is also making a significant contribution to low-cost home ownership particularly through its shared ownership programme, targeted mainly at rural areas.

Seals

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many coastal sites have seal populations; and how many have been lost in the last five years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We are advised by the Natural Environment Research Council that the last comprehensive survey of grey seals along the Welsh coastline was undertaken in 1974. This showed that although there was a concentration of seals on and around the islands of Ramsey and Skomer, Pembrokeshire generally seals were spread widely along beaches and in small caves along the Welsh coastline. It is therefore not possible to define specific "coastal sites" in Wales or to say how many there were or whether any have been lost in the last five years. The study concentrated on grey seals, as the common seal does not occur in the coastal waters around Wales.

However, based on a long series of data from the island of Skomer and on local observations along the Welsh mainland coast, the sea mammals research unit of NERC and the Nature Conservancy Council believe that the grey seal population in Wales has remained stable during the last five years.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the waiting list numbers for each hospital in Wales in respect of *(a)* in-patients and *(b)* out-patients in each of the specialties for which his Department has established a treatment centre in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information for 31 March 1990 has been placed in the Library of the House.

Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the publicity campaigns that have been undertaken by his Department in each of the last three years and the sums spent on each in respect of *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* television advertising and *(c)* other forms of advertising and promotion on each.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not readily available, and I will reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Suicide)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total number of verdicts of suicide which have been returned on prisoners who died by their own hand during 1990 in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: As at 17 December, a total of 48 inmates had died at their own hands during 1990. A verdict of suicide was returned on 19 of these inmates; inquests on 19 of the deaths are yet to be held.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in England and Wales died by their own hand in each year from 1980 until the latest available date; and of these, what number were *(a)* remand prisoners, *(b)* female prisoners, and *(c)* prisoners under the age of 21 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is set out in the table

Deaths at the inmate's own hand at HM Prison Service establishments 1 January 1980—17 December 1990

Year	Unsentenced inmates[1]	Female inmates	Inmates aged	All inmates under 21[2]
1980	12	—	2	25 (21)
1981	8	1	2	21 (16)
1982	15	—	5	25 (18)
1983	12	—	3	27 (21)
1984	15	—	4	27 (23)
1985	19	1	3	29 (23)
1986	14	1	5	21 (17)
1987	28	1	7	46 (42)
1988	21	—	9	37 (31)
1989[4]	27	2	11	48 (34)
1990[4]	25	1	8	[3]48 (19)

[1] Includes inmates who had been convicted by not yet sentenced.
[2] The figures in brackets show the number of deaths for which a suicide verdict was returned.
[3] Inquests have yet to be held on 19 deaths which occurred in 1990.
[4] To 17 December.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training is offered within the prison service to staff on how to deal with suicidal inmates; and if he has any plans to increase the amount of training offered.

Mrs. Rumbold *(holding answer 18 December 1990):* All new entrant prison officers are given training in suicide awareness and interpersonal skills as part of their initial course. In-service training is organised on the cascade principle. Selected members of staff attend a three-day course at the prison service college, at which they are trained in suicide prevention and also learn how to deliver this training within their own establishments. Courses are arranged locally as and when governors are able to release staff to attend them. I welcome the increasing participation by the Samaritans in suicide prevention courses both at the prison service college and at a number of individual establishments.

We shall be considering the need to accelerate and develop the in-service training programme in the light of the report on suicide and self-injury by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, which has been published today.

Mr. Lorrain Osman

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the case of Mr. Lorrain Osman.

Mr. John Patten: Mr. Osman is the subject of an extradition request made by the Government of Hong Kong, in respect of various charges there, involving conspiracy to defraud, conspiracy to steal, bribery, theft and fraudulent false accounting. In support of their request, the Hong Kong Government submitted over 30,000 pages of evidence.

Mr. Osman was arrested on 6 December 1985 and remanded in custody. On 1 June 1987, after a hearing lasting 66 working days, he was committed to custody by the chief metropolitan stipendiary magistrate for surrender. Since then, he has appealed four times by applications for writs of habeas corpus. He cannot be surrendered while appeal proceedings are pending. His fourth application was dismissed by the Divisional Court on 12 December 1990 as an abuse of process and contravention of statute. The judgment said that no blame could be attached to the Hong Kong Government for the lapse of time while Mr. Osman has been pursuing his appeals, and expressed the hope that the question of return could be determined without delay. Mr. Osman may apply, within 14 days of the judgment, for leave to appeal to the House of Lords.

Acacia Place, NW8 (Armed Raid)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the departmental designation of those officials not members of the Metropolitan police, who attended an armed raid on No. 3 Acacia place, NW8 recently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner that only officers of the Metropolitan police were involved in the search at 3 Acacia place on 27 November.

Third Safe Country Policy

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to review the operation of the third safe country policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Police Powers of Entry

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to extend police powers of entry into private premises to conduct searches if it is believed that explosives or ammunition are being kept there.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend is discussing with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and with the director of the Health and Safety Commission new draft regulations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in order to improve controls over the storage of explosives on private premises. We are considering the designation of a small number of police officers as inspectors under the 1974 Act. They will attract, under section 20 of the Act, those powers which are necessary for them to fulfil their duties under the proposed Control of Explosives Regulations.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he intends to provide about the use of irradiated food in prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Regulations made under the Food Safety Act 1990 are intended to allow a person buying food or being served with food to decide whether or not to consume irradiated foods. This poses difficulties in a prison environment. We have therefore no plans for the central procurement of irradiated foods for use in prisons. For minor items purchased locally, prisons are being advised to avoid irradiated foods.

Prisons

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has reached any conclusions on the review of the prison estate following his consultation with staff, trade unions and boards of visitors.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) on 17 July at columns 468-70, following a review of the prison estate, a number of proposals involving either changes in the role of prison service establishments or in some cases, closure. I have carefully considered the comments and suggestions received since then, including a number from right hon. and hon. Members. I have now concluded that most of the proposals which emerged from the review should be implemented, although further thought should be given to some.

I have decided that two young offender institutions—Campfield House and Lowdham Grange—should close by the end of March 1991. In addition, HMYOI Eastwood

Park and Her Majesty's prison Northeye should close in 1992-93. I have also decided that the closure of Her Majesty's prison Lancaster should be brought forward to coincide with the opening of a neighbouring new establishment, HMYOI Lancaster Farms, currently scheduled for 1992-93.

I have decided that the changes of role proposed in the consultation exercise should also go ahead, with the exception of the proposals relating to Send, Brockhill, Oxford, Risley and Thorp Arch. The changes of role proposed for the first four were designed to meet problems which the latest population figures suggest may not now arise. It is only sensible therefore that these establishments should continue for the present with their existing tasks. The intention now is to close Brockhill when it is no longer needed for its present role, the timing being phased with the opening of Brinsford and Blakenhurst which are new establishments both currently scheduled to be available in the latter part of 1991-92.

I have also concluded that the building programme offers an alternative and quicker means of offering relief to the young prisoner population in Leeds and Hull than the conversion of Thorp Arch would have done. It is therefore intended to locate these prisoners in the new establishment at Moorland during the second half of next year. Moorland will offer the most modern accommodation, and the opportunity for the prison service to develop an improved regime for those on remand.

Revised projections for the prison population to 1998 were published in Home Office statistical bulletin 33/90, a copy of which is in the Library. These projections were substantially lower than those previously published. Prison service management will therefore be conducting a further review of the estate in the light of this trend in the prison population and the resources available.

Election Expenses

Mr. Charles Wardle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress on the review of the system of controls on candidates' expenses at elections announced on 21 June 1989, *Official Report*, columns *131-33*.

Mrs. Rumbold: The second and final stage of the review has now been set in hand. A consultative group is being set up under Home Office chairmanship and representatives of the main political parties and of local authority associations are being invited to participate. The review will include Scotland and Northern Ireland. The group's terms of reference are to consider whether the current provisions for controlling expenditure on election campaigning at parliamentary, European parliamentary and local government elections are both appropriate and effective and, where appropriate, to make recommendations for change.

Broadcasting (Terrorist Organisations)

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking under the Broadcasting Act 1990 to continue the restrictions on the broadcasting of direct statements by representatives of terrorists' organisations connected with Northern Ireland and their supporters.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have today issued notices, to take effect from 1 January 1991, to the following broadcasters and broadcasting regulatory bodies.

(i) the independent Television Commission, under section 10 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, in respect of licensees which will be broadcasting from that date:

(ii) th Welsh Fourth Channel Authority, under section 63 of the 1990 Act, which will be a broadcaster from that date; and

(iii) the Radio Authority, under section 94 of the 1990 Act, in respect of licensees which will be broadcasting from that date.

I have also issued amended notices, under section 29 of the Broadcasting Act 1981 (which is continued by the 1990 Act), to:

(i) the ITC, in respect of those ITV companies who will continue as programme contractors until the expiry of their existing contracts at the end of 1992 and also in respect of Channel 4; and

(ii) the Radio Authority, in respect of those independent radio stations which do not opt to become licensees until the expiry of their existing contracts.

Copies of the notices have been placed in the Library.

Public Lavatories (Police Deployment)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the cost of the deployment of four officers between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989 at the public lavatories at Highbury crescent, London, N5;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the costs to the police of the arrest, detention, charging and subsequent prosecution of 35 men arrested between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989 at the public lavatories at Highbury crescent, London, N5.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Metropolitan police that no additional costs were incurred in the deployment of the four police officers; and that the only identifiable additional cost incurred in the arrest, detention, charging and prosecution of the 35 men arrested was approximately £600 in overtime payments to police officers involved in the court proceedings.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many men arrested at the public lavatories between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989 at Highbury crescent, London, N5, were tried in *(a)* the Crown court and *(b)* the magistrates court; how many were convicted; and what sentences were imposed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, of the 35 men arrested, 15 were tried in the Crown court and the remaining 20 in the magistrates court. Thirty were convicted, with fines ranging from £75 to £150, and some were also bound over to keep the peace.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis indicating the number of years' policing experience the Commissioner requires of police officers who are engaged on surveillance duties in public lavatories.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Metropolitan police that, when police officers are employed on surveillance duties at public lavatories, it is force policy that at least one must have experience of this type of duty.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many complaints were received from members of the public between 1 September 1989 and 31 December 1989 concerning activities in the public lavatories at Highbury crescent, London, N5; and how many such complainants gave statements to the police, pursuant to section 9 of the Criminal Justice Act 1987, section 102 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 or regulation 70 of the Magistrates' Courts Rules 1981, regulation 70.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. I understand that the Metropolitan police were informed in writing of local concerns about the public lavatories in question.

Road Traffic Law

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in implementing the various recommendations of the road traffic law review on the enforcement of road traffic laws by the police and through the courts other than those covered in the current Road Traffic Bill.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Substantial progress has been made in implementing many of the recommendations of the road traffic law review which concern enforcement by the police and through the courts and which do not require legislation.

The review recommended that chief constables should consider equipping some of their traffic patrol vehicles with video recording equipment. We are aware of 21 forces in England and Wales which use video cars in the enforcement of road traffic law.

The review recommended that more comprehensive information about driver licensing and driver records should be available to officers on patrol. A feasibility study on improved links between the police national computer and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency was completed in March 1990. It is intended to take this forward as part of the development of the police national computer 2 in order to make full information about driver records available to officers on patrol.

The review made a number of recommendations about the use of alternatives to prosecution. In 1989, over three quarters of all motoring offences against which official action was taken were dealt with by written warning, fixed penalty, or under the vehicle defect rectification scheme. Substantial numbers will also have been dealt with by verbal warnings at the roadside, although these are not recorded.

The operation of fixed penalty procedures was comprehensively reviewed in 1988. A copy of the report of this review was placed in the Library on 27 June 1989. The system continues to function well, and its operation is monitored by a Home Office-chaired working group, on which the police and the courts are represented.

The review's recommendations on the vehicle defect rectification scheme and written warnings were pursued through consultation with the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers. After consulting all forces, the Association of Chief Police Officers was satisfied that the vehicle defect rectification scheme is operating efficiently and consistently. It will be keeping its operation under review.

The Association of Chief Police Officers endorsed the conclusion of the review that warnings should be used whenever possible. However, they did not consider it desirable to pursue the recommendations about standardising the format of warnings, primarily because of the widely varying circumstances in which warnings may be given.

The review made several recommendations about the provision of information about sentencing to the courts. The Home Office is working closely with the Justices' Clerks Society and the Magistrates Association on how sentencing information might best be presented to the courts. We hope that this will assist the courts to make a general comparison of their sentencing practices.

Broadcasting Unit

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the role and functions of the broadcasting unit in his Department; what steps are taken to ensure that its activities are non-party political; and what powers it has to prevent or encourage broadcasting in specific cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Officials of the broadcasting department of the Home Office provide information and advice to Ministers on broadcasting policy. They are subject to the normal civil service rules concerning party political activities; and have no powers to prevent or encourage broadcasting in specific cases.

Sexual Offences

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned for the offence of procuring the commission of homosexual acts under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 and, of those convicted, how many were (i) fined, and what were the 10 highest fines imposed, (ii) were given suspended sentences, and what were the lengths of these suspended sentences in each individual case and (iii) were imprisoned, and what were the lengths of each of these custodial sentences, in each year from 1980 to 1989;

(2) how many men were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned for the offence of persistently soliciting or importuning other men in a public place for immoral purposes under section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and, in the cases of those convicted, how many were (i) fined, and what were the 10 highest fines imposed, (ii) given suspended custodial sentences, and what were the lengths of these suspended sentences in each case and (iii) imprisoned, and what were the lengths of each of these custodial sentences, in each year from 1980 to 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Information relating to section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 is given in the table. Data collected centrally under section 32 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956 cannot distinguish whether males or females have been solicited or importuned by male offenders.

Number of males cautioned and convicted for offences under section 4 of the Sexual Offences Act 1967

Year and sentence given	Cautioned	Convicted
1980 1 offender was fined £50 1 offender was given a suspended sentence of 60 days	—	2
1981	—	—
1982	—	—
1983 1 offender was given an unsuspended sentence of 30 days 1 offender was given a conditional discharge	1	2
1984	1	—
1985	—	—
1986	—	—
1987	[1]	—
1988 2 offenders were each fined £150 2 offenders were each given a conditional discharge	[1]	4
1989	—	—

[1] Unavailable.

Remand (Juveniles)

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the secure establishments that are regularly used by the magistrates courts of south Wales for remanding juveniles and the incidence of their usage.

Mrs. Rumbold: Boys aged 15 to 16 whom the south Wales courts remand to prison custody are held in remand accommodation at Cardiff or Swansea prisons. On Friday 14 December, three were held at Cardiff and one at Swansea.

After-care Accommodation

Sir Charles Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding has been allocated to support voluntary after-care accommodation projects provided by housing associations and other bodies; what the revaluation rate for 1991-92 will be; and when the voluntary organisations concerned will be informed of those figures.

Mr. John Patten: A total of £9,179,000 has been allocated to the voluntary after-care grant scheme in 1991-92, a proportion of which will be used to fund accommodation projects provided by housing associations and other bodies. We expect the revaluation factor to be at least 8 per cent. for 1991-92. We are already discussing with a number of the major providers of after-care accommodation their likely provision for 1991-92, and an announcement will be made as early as possible in the new year.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state *(a)* the planned outturn expenditure, expressed in 1989-90 prices for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 on payments under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 and the percentage increase or decrease in that figure over the estimated actual outturn expenditure for 1989-90 in 1989-90 prices and over the planned outturn expenditure for 1989-90 in 1989-90 prices, *(b)* the proportion of that planned outturn expenditure for 1992-93 and for 1993-94 which he has set aside as the upper limit to be made available to be spent on successful applications by training and enterprise councils by way of grants to voluntary organisations, *(c)* the proportion of that planned outturn expenditure for 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and for 1993-94 which he has set aside as the upper limit to be made available to be spent, on successful applications by local authorities by way of grants to voluntary organisations and *(d)* the proportion of that planned outturn expenditure for 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and for 1993-94 which he has set aside as the upper limit to be made available to be spent on successful applications by local authorities by way of secondment of staff to, or other external staffing arrangements for, voluntary organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information is as follows:

(a) The planned outturn figures for the years 1991-94 and the latest estimate of 1990-91 outturn will appear in the Home Office annual report to be published in February 1991.

(b), (c), (d) The guidelines for section 11 grant require local authorities to include a proportion of applications from voluntary projects. No separate allocation will however be set aside for such applications. The allocation of grant as between local authorities and training and enterprise councils will be made nearer the time when final provision is determined.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what arrangements he proposes to make or enter into for processing applications from training and enterprise councils for sums to be paid in 1992-93 and in 1993-94 under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 for payment of grants to voluntary organisations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what criteria he proposes to use in determining which applications by training and enterprise councils for payments under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 shall be successful; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Training and enterprise councils are ineligible to receive grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 (which restricts the payment of grants to local authorities). Applications submitted by TECs for funding of projects with effect from 1 April 1992 under the new ethnic minority grant in parallel with section 11 grant will be considered and processed in accordance with the new arrangements announced by the then Home Secretary in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 18 October, at column 897-98. Copies of the material issued to TECs were placed in the Library. This sets out the criteria by which successful applications will be determined.

DEFENCE

Avimo Ltd.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is seeking reimbursement of any costs incurred in connection with the supply of inaccurate technical data or defective Government-furnished equipment to Avimo Ltd. relating to its contract for production of TOGS equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: It would not be appropriate to comment on this matter until full investigation of the options open to the Department has been concluded.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the outcome of his Department's claim against Avimo Ltd. for liquidated damages in respect of the delayed delivery of TOGS equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following discussions with the company on the Department's claim for liquidated damages, the Department accepted that delays had arisen for reasons outside the company's control, and the claim was withdrawn.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has made any ex gratia payment in respect of technical data or Government-furnished equipment supplied to Avimo Ltd. in connection with its contract for the supply of TOGS equipment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department has made a payment to Avimo Ltd. arising from additional costs incurred by the company, for reasons outside its control, in performing the contract.

Low Flying

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum height at which aircraft are permitted to fly in an east-west direction over Derwent Water.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Aircraft flying in this area of the United Kingdom low flying system must adhere to a minimum separation distance of 250 ft.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the concentration of the bulk of operational low flying in the Borders tactical training area since August.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The distribution of operational low flying, including that associated with our Gulf commitments, is constrained by the location of major operating bases and ranges, the prevailing weather and the suitability of the various tactical training areas for individual practice sorties. My Department's aim, reflected in the 1988 extension of the Borders tactical training area, remains, however, to distribute such activity as widely as is practicable and all three tactical areas have been made available for Gulf-related training in recent months.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying movements at less than 250 ft were authorised in each of the tactical training areas in each month from January 1988 to December 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The numbers of movements authorised for flying below 250 ft within the tactical training areas between January 1988 and December 1989 were as follows:

	Northern Scotland	*Central Wales*	*Borders*
1988			
January	37	0	41
February	255	1	292
March	286	6	174
April	0	0	0
May	0	0	0
June	0	30	0
July	0	12	94
August	24	0	121
September	20	7	54
October	162	2	138
November	25	2	126
December	19	0	187
1989			
January	9	0	74
February	49	32	517
March	72	23	462
April	68	15	55
May	376	0	37
June	15	0	0
July	13	0	141
August	11	0	44
September	94	7	316
October	96	12	104
November	14	0	38
December	0	0	0

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what authorisation has been given since 2 August to United States air force units based in the United Kingdom to fly at heights less than 250 ft above ground level in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Agreement was given to a request that a small number of USAF A-10 aircrew based in the United Kingdom, who may be required to deploy to the middle east at short notice, should, very exceptionally, be authorised to undertake a limited amount of low flying training at heights down to 100 ft in the mid-Wales tactical training area in December.

In the event, no such training has taken place to date.

Strobe Lights

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to fit high intensity strobe lights to *(a)* Tornado GR1s, *(b)* Tornado F3s, *(c)* Chinooks, *(d)* Nimrods, *(e)* Tucanos and *(f)* Royal Navy Sea Kings.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Plans already exist to fit high intensity strobe lights to both variants of Tornado, Chinook and Nimrod. The Tucano is already fitted with "bright" strobe lights and there are currently no plans to retrofit these with HISLs. Due to its different mode of helicopter operations, the Navy has no current requirement for these lights. The exception is the Gazelle, used primarily for basic flying training purposes, and operated over land, which is fitted.

Air Accidents

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates of publication of all military aircraft accident summaries published this year.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information is as follows:

Details of MAAS (aircraft type and tail number)	*Date of publication in 1990*
RAF Sea King—XZ585	12 January
RAF Phantom—XV428	31 January
RAF Phantom—XV437	5 March

Details of MAAS (aircraft type and tail number)	Date of publication in 1990
Mid-air collision, 2 RAF Tornados—ZA394 and ZA593	7 March
RAF Hawk—XX304	28 March
RAF Phantom—XT908	29 March
RAF Jaguar—XZ359	30 April
RAF Tornado—ZE833	6 June
RAF Hawk—XX192	11 June
Mid-air collision, 2 RAF Hawks—XX182 and XX291	12 June
RAF Chinook—ZA678	19 July
RN Lynx—XZ243	[1]28 August
RN Sea King—XZ916	[1]28 August
RN Sea King—ZA170	[1]28 August
RN Sea Fury—TF956	[1]28 August
RAF Tornado—ZA468	9 October
Mid-air collision RAF Jaguar—XZ108 and Tornado—ZA394	9 October
RAF Hawk—XX347	6 December

[1] MAAS placed in the Libraries of both Houses but not issued by MOD Press Office.

United States Defence Department Employees

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of United States nationals employed by the United States Department of Defence in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: The total number of United States civilians employed by the United States Department of Defence in the United Kingdom is some 4,500. For the number of United States service personnel, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 30 November 1990 at columns *548-49*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United States nationals are employed by the United States Department of Defense at each base or facility operated in support of United States forces in the United Kingdom, giving the local authority for each establishment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information regarding the employment of United States civilians at individual bases and facilities in the United Kingdom is not held in this form. For the numbers of United States service personnel, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 30 November 1990 at columns *548-49*.

Hunting

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton on 27 November, *Official Report*, column *378*, if he will list the dates of renewal for each licence allowing hunting on Ministry of Defence land.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Details of the dates the licences for hunting are renewed on each year are as follows:

	Date
The Hampshire Hunt	1 September
Mr. Gochen's Hounds	1 September
The Chiddingfold, Leconfield and Cowdrey Hounds	1 September
The Windsor Forest Blood Hounds	1 September
The Royal Artillery Hunt	1 August
The South and West Wiltshire Hunt	1 August
The Avondale Hunt	1 August
The Sennybridge Hunt	1 September
The Irfon and Tywi Hunt	1 September
The Brecon Hunt	1 September
The Glyn Celyn Beagles	1 September
The Essex and Suffolk Hunt	1 January
The Cambridgeshire Hunt	No fixed date.[1]
The Bedale Hunt	1 September
The West of Yore Hunt	1 December
The Zetland Hunt	1 September
The Wensleydale Foxhounds	1 September
The Catterick Beagles	1 August
The Border Hunt	31 December
The Tynedale Hunt	31 March

[1] Depends on whether the Hunt wants to use MoD land.

United States Bases

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the NATO-funded military construction projects that will be in construction for United States forces at bases in the United Kingdom in the fiscal years 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 30 November 1990 at column *535*.

RAF Quedgely

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton on 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *529-30*, for what purpose Ministry of Defence police personnel were stationed at RAF Quedgely in 1986 and 1987; and what was the number of personnel on each occasion.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: MOD police officers have been stationed at RAF Quedgely for many years in their normal role, which is the policing and protection of Crown property. The complement in 1986 and 1987 was one inspector, one sergeant and 19 constables.

As the hon. Member will know from the answer which I gave previously, all MOD police officers are required to undergo initial and continuation public order training. In 1986 the opportunity arose to use facilities at RAF Quedgeley and 221 MOD police officers received continuation public order training there in that year, followed by 74 in 1987. This facility is no longer available.

RAF Greenham Common

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of each category of treaty-limited items were at RAF Greenham Common on the latest reporting date under the intermediate nuclear forces treaty.

Mr. Alan Clark: Fifty-two ground-launched cruise missiles and 12 transporter erector launcher vehicles, including spares, were at Greenham Common on 1 December 1990, the latest reporting date under the INF treaty.

Military Construction Projects

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton on 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *535-6*, which military construction projects that have not started construction have been approved by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member on 30 November 1990 at columns *535-6*.

Nuclear Warhead Tests

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Governments have been in communication with the United Kingdom concerning the recent United Kingdom nuclear warhead tests on 14 November.

Mr. Alan Clark: Apart from the Government of the United States, with whom the United Kingdom exchanges information under the terms of the 1985 United States/United Kingdom agreement for mutual co-operation, no Governments have been in communication with the United Kingdom about the joint United States/United Kingdom underground nuclear test on 14 November 1990.

Civilian Drivers

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have occurred to the conditions of employment of civilian drivers employed by his Department in the last six months.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: None.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what provision will be made for the accommodation of civilian drivers employed by his Department whilst they are on detached duty after 30 November;

(2) what provision will be made for the accommodation of civilian drivers employed by his Department whilst they are on detached duty prior to 30 November.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is normal for civilian staff, including drivers, when on detached duty to make their own accommodation arrangements and to claim the appropriate rates of subsistence. On occasions, official accommodation may be made available.

"Options for Change"

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the significant changes to the operational status of British military forces that have resulted from the "Options for Change" study.

Mr. Alan Clark: Work is continuing to refine and cost the broad proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in July. Announcements of force level changes will be made as progress in our planning allows, and we have already announced that 11 Royal Navy vessels have been, or are shortly to be decommissioned and that two RAF stations in Germany are to be closed.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the significant changes to the procurement programme that have resulted from the "Options for Change" study.

Mr. Alan Clark: The continuing work to refine and cost the broad proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in July includes an assessment of our future equipment requirements. During the defence debate on 18 June, I was able to make an early announcement of the decision not to proceed with the order for the eighth batch of Tornado attrition aircraft. Further changes will be announced as progress in our planning allows.

Antares

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there has been any change to the instructions given to submarine commanders since the sinking of the fishing boat Antares.

Mr. Alan Clark: No changes have been made to current operating instructions. However, as the hon. Member is aware, the Royal Navy board of inquiry is conducting an investigation into the circumstances surrounding HMS Trenchant's fouling of trawler gear at the time of the loss of the Antares, and it is possible that this will recommend changes to current instructions.

Submarine Activity

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to provide information on the times and areas of United States submarine activity to fishing boats in the Clyde.

Mr. Alan Clark: United States Navy submarine movements in the Clyde area are included in the notification scheme introduced on 17 December.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications he has had with foreign military authorities regarding the movement of submarines in British coastal waters.

Mr. Alan Clark: There are regular communications between Royal Navy and allied navy authorities regarding such operations in United Kingdom coastal waters. Allied submarine movements in the Clyde area are included in the notification scheme introduced on 17 December.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the exact nature of the information regarding submarine activity he intends to provide to Clyde fishing boats.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information on sea areas within the firth of Clyde in which dived submarine operations are planned and the intended times of such operations will be broadcast by the Clyde coastguard every four hours.

Tanks and Armoured Vehicles (Conversion)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been undertaken by his Department to assess the potential for conversion to civilian use of the tanks and armoured combat vehicles that the United Kingdom is committed to permanent withdrawal from military availability under the Paris treaty on conventional force reductions in Europe.

Mr. Alan Clark: There is no such potential.

SCOTLAND

The Gulf

21. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provisions made in Scottish hospitals for the reception of service casualties in the event of the use of the military option in the Gulf.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Plans which provide for the treatment of military casualties in Scottish hospitals in the event of war have been reviewed. If required, beds would be made available in national health service hospitals in Scotland to treat service casualties arising from possible hostilities in the Gulf.

Local Government Finance

22. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has for sorting out the financial difficulties of local authorities which have arisen as a result of the poll tax.

Mr. Lang: On the basis of their own estimates of community charge collection levels, local authorities will receive around 99 per cent. of their total budgeted income in relation to both 1989-90 and the current year. We therefore must avoid making too much of their difficulties, especially as aggregate external finance for next year is being increased by 10·4 per cent.

30. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much local government spending has increased or decreased in Scotland since the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Allan Stewart: On the basis of local authorities' 1990-91 budget estimates, expenditure has increased by 8·94 per cent. since the introduction of the community charge in Scotland in 1 April 1989.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each local authority area in Scotland *(a)* the number of individuals who are liable to pay the personal community charge, *(b)* the number of people who are paying the personal community charge and *(c)* the number of people who are exempt from paying the personal community charge, separately distinguishing the numbers by exemption category.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information on the number of people who are paying the personal community charge is not held centrally. The following table gives the figures requested which are available and relates to 1 July 1990. Information held by community charges registration officers on people who are exempt from the personal community charge is not comprehensive, and the figures given are estimates provided by the local authorities.

Numbers on the community charge register: July 1990

			Known exemptions from community charge					
	Number liable to personal community charge (including students)	*18+ in receipt child benefit*	*Prisoners*	*Foreign armed forces*	*Dependents of foreign armed forces*	*Severely mentally handicapped*	*Other*	*Total*
Borders	78,285	85	8	0	0	300	19	412
Central	202,412	237	301	0	0	663	2,880	4,081
Dumfries and Galloway	111,434	159	64	0	0	457	124	804
Fife	259,961	449	131	22	0	825	334	1,761
Grampian	373,581	400	114	687	0	1,159	1,039	3,399
Highland	148,270	169	85	129	0	346	47	776
Lothian	578,982	875	339	113	0	2,388	688	4,403
Strathclyde	1,737,284	4,750	5,306	1,737	247	7,609	15,458	35,107
Tayside	291,682	578	67	450	0	843	118	2,056
Orkney	14,372	40	2	0	0	41	237	320
Shetland	15,982	18	3	0	0	51	190	262
Western Isles	22,165	16	5	0	0	112	5	138
All Scotland total	3,834,410	7,776	6,425	3,318	247	14,794	21,139	53,519

Notes:
1. The Lothian figure for foreign armed forces includes their dependents.
2. "Other" includes patients in residential homes, nursing homes or hospitals, members of religious communities, residents in Crown property, persons of no fixed abode, etc.

Scottish Parliament

23. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans for a directly elected Scottish parliament.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No.

24. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review or repeal the poll tax in Scotland.

27. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review or repeal the poll tax.

32. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to review the community charge legislation in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has announced the Government's intention to conduct a careful and fundamental review of the community charge arrangements in Scotland, England and Wales.

Freight

25. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the movement of freight within, and to and from, Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The provision made by my right hon. Friend for expenditure on roads and transport is aimed at serving the needs of all types of transport users, including freight hauliers, and at ensuring that Scotland has transport infrastructure and systems which are safe and efficient.

Roads

26. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps are currently being taken by his office to assess the implications of the single market for road communications in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Improved communications and transport links are particularly important for the continued success and development of the Scottish economy in relation to the single market. The Government has made clear the role of the M6, M1, M25 widening and the A74 upgrading to Scotland.

To assist future decisions on road investment in Scotland a major trunk and key principal road network review is currently in progress and is due to report early next year.

This will take into account a large number of factors affecting traffic growth in different regions of Scotland including economic development.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out *(a)* total expenditure, in real terms, on motorways and trunk roads in Scotland for each of the years from 1980-81 to 1989-90, *(b)* estimated total expenditure on motorways and trunk roads in 1990-91 and *(c)* planned provision for motorways and trunk roads in each of the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

£ million

Financial year	*Actual expenditure*	*Constant 1990-91 prices*
1980-81	91	164
1981-82	104	171
1982-83	110	168
1983-84	106	155
1984-85	115	160
1985-86	119	157
1986-87	115	147
1987-88	125	152
1988-89	131	149
1989-90	163	174
[1]1990-91	201	201
[1]1991-92	198	189
[1]1992-93	211	195
[1]1993-94	215	193

[1] Figures have been revalued using GDP deflators.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reasons for the £9 million reduction planned in expenditure on motorways and trunk roads for 1991-92.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The trunk road programme in Scotland has benefited from a substantial increase in resources in recent, successive expenditure settlements. This has enabled very significant progress to be made in upgrading Scotland's trunk road infrastructure.

For 1991-92 it was necessary to balance the expenditure required to sustain a realistic trunk road programme against the many other important and competing demands on resources within the Scottish block. The small reduction in overall provision for roads for 1991-92 will still allow significant progress to be made on our planned programme of improvements to Scotland's key strategic routes, including the upgrading of the A74 to motorway.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the areas in which the £9 million reduction in expenditure on motorways and trunk roads will be made and the specific road schemes which are likely to be affected.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The programme of new construction and improvements will be the only area affected by the small reduction in trunk road expenditure announced for 1991-92. Some revision of planned start dates for future schemes may be necessary as a result. Final decisions on which schemes might be affected will not be taken until March with the announcement of scheme starts for the year ahead. This enables full account to be taken of the latest information available on the resources required to meet existing ongoing commitments, the consequent balance of funds remaining and the state of readiness and relative priority of schemes within the national programme.

Homelessness

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now take steps to make the code of guidance to the homeless persons legislation mandatory on local authorities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not think that it would be appropriate to take away the discretion of local authorities to take into account the needs and circumstances of particular cases. A mandatory code could not cover the wide range of matters dealt with in the present draft without severely fettering that discretion and reducing authorities' effectiveness.

Fishing

29. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish fishing industry to discuss the industry's prospects for 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My noble Friend the Minister responsible for agriculture and fisheries met the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on Thursday 13 December. A number of issues were discussed in relation to the industry's prospects for 1991.

38. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had recently with representatives of the west coast fishing industry on the state of west coast fishing stocks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My noble Friend the Minister responsible for Agriculture and Fisheries met the Scottish Fishermen's Federation which represents many west coast fishermen on Thursday 13 December. A number of issues, including the state of west coast fish stocks, were discussed.

Housing Policies

31. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit Corkerhill, Tencharhill, and Moorpark housing areas of Govan constituency to discuss Government housing policies with tenants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Industrial Policy

33. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Trades Union Congress to design industrial policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Scottish Office Ministers have met representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on several occasions in recent months. My right hon. Friend and I hope to maintain a continuing dialogue with the STUC on matters affecting the Scottish economy and industry.

Regional Selective Assistance

34. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whom he consults before making regional selective assistance available to applicants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Industrial Development Advisory Board is consulted before making any substantial offer of regional selective assistance. Furthermore, and in line with practices agreed between the Scottish Office, Welsh Office and the Department of Trade and Industry, market advice is sought from the Government Department with the lead interest in the particular sector involved. Other consultations may be undertaken depending on the particular circumstances involved.

Highland Region Schools

35. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to undertake a tour of schools premises within Highland region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to visit Highland region.

Health Board Funding

36. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will reconsider his allocation to Scottish health boards for 1991-92.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As no decision has been taken or announced on allocations to health boards for 1991-92, it would be difficult for me to meet the hon. Gentleman's request.

Steel Industry

37. **Dr. Bray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future of steel plants in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: British Steel has confirmed that, subject to market conditions, it expects there to be a continuing commercial requirement for steelmaking at Ravenscraig and plate-rolling at Dalzell at least until the end of 1994. I welcome British Steel's expressed willingness to co-operate with the Scottish Development Agency's study on the prospects for the steel industry in Scotland and to give careful consideration to any commercial opportunities which the study might identify.

Scottish Development Agency

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amounts paid to projects in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow and *(b)* Strathclyde by the Scottish Development Agency in the years from 1985-86 to 1989-90 years in (i) cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of total budget.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the following table:

£ thousands

District	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
(a) Greenock and Port Glasgow					
(i) Total expenditure	3,327	2,318	2,554	4,282	7,245
(ii) Percentage of total budget	3·1	2·1	2·3	3·6	5·3
(b) Strathclyde					
(i) Total expenditure	53,570	62,669	67,392	67,652	71,252
(ii) Percentage of total budget	49·7	57·0	59·6	56·9	51·8

Note: The percentage of total budget is based on total expenditure excluding marketing, promotion and running costs. Area expenditure figures also exclude such costs.

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total amounts paid to projects in *(a)* Kilmarnock and Loudoun, *(b)* Dundee, *(c)* Motherwell and *(d)* Hamilton districts by the Scottish Development Agency for the years 1986-87 to 1989-90 (i) in cash terms and (ii) as a percentage of total budget.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* The information is set out in the table below.

District	*1986-87 £'000*	*1987-88 £'000*	*1988-89 £'000*	*1989-90 £'000*
(a) Kilmarnock and Loudoun				
(i) Total expenditure	767	1,075	259	550
(ii) Percentage of total budget	0·7	1·0	0·2	0·4
(b) Dundee city				
(i) Total expenditure	5,397	5,782	3,733	6,357
(ii) Percentage of total budget	4·9	5·1	3·1	4·6
(c) Motherwell				
(i) Total expenditure	5,470	3,422	4,675	5,436
(ii) Percentage of total budget	5·0	3·0	3·9	4·0
(d) Hamilton				

District	1986-87 £'000	1987-88 £'000	1988-89 £'000	1989-90 £'000
(i) Total expenditure	1,086	2,491	1,958	918
(ii) Percentage of total budget	1·0	2·2	1·6	0·7

Note: The percentage of total budget is based on total expenditure excluding marketing, promotion and running costs. Area expenditure figures also exclude such costs.

Training

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of training places in (i) employment training and (ii) youth training contracted with the Training Agency in each month from January in *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested about the number of training places in employment training is not available. The available information about the number of youth training places is set out in the table.

Youth training agreed places

	January 1990	February 1990	March 1990
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	8,237	8,237	8,243
Lothian and Borders	7,379	7,347	7,367
Lanarkshire	6,426	6,427	6,427
Highlands and Islands	3,583	3,586	3,591
Grampian and Tayside	9,118	9,081	9,001
Glasgow city	10,030	10,378	10,352
Central and Fife	9,194	9,012	9,163
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	6,839	6,845	6,845
Scotland	60,806	60,913	60,989

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of action plans for employment training completed in each month since September 1989 in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table.

	September 1989	October 1989	November 1989	December 1989	January 1990	February 1990	March 1990
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	997	984	1,170	633	767	1,081	1,210
Lothian and Borders	792	731	848	708	572	557	1,296
Lanarkshire	781	780	651	486	513	620	746
Highlands and Islands	262	184	259	322	226	260	599
Grampian and Tayside	1,091	847	896	673	684	1,071	1,119
Glasgow city	1,697	1,707	1,650	1,031	1,382	1,692	1,984
Central and Fife	887	647	681	559	585	521	717
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	1,122	986	925	714	809	920	1,158

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of contracted training places in employment training is contracted to voluntary sector training managers in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table.

	Proportion of employment training places contracted to voluntary sector Per cent.
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	33·0
Lothian and Borders	29·0
Lanarkshire	17·4
Highlands and Islands	Nil
Grampian and Tayside	
(Grampian)	14·1
(Tayside)	33·6
Glasgow city	17·0
Central and Fife	
(Central)	8·8
(Fife)	28·0
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	16·0

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training agents and training managers in employment training which have (i) gone into liquidation, (ii) not had contracts with the Training Agency renewed or (iii) ceased to provide employment training for any other reason in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is contained in the table:

Training Agency area	*Training agents and managers who have gone into liquidation*	*Training agents and managers who have not had contracts with the Training Agency renewed*	*Training agents and managers who have ceased to provide Employment Training for any other reason*
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	Westwood Training Services	—	Training Services (Inverclyde) Ltd. Paisley College of Technology
Lothian and Borders	Community Opportunities, West Lothian	—	Midlothian District Council
Lanarkshire	Westwood Training Services	—	Omega Training Services
Highlands and Islands	Westwood Training services	—	—
Grampian and Tayside	—	—	Dundee Survival Group
Glasgow City	Westwood Training Services	—	—
Central and Fife	A & M Projects Ltd.	—	—
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	Westwood Training Services	—	—

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the adult population, the number of people unemployed and the number of people unemployed for more than six months, 12 months, 18 months and 24 months, within each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As at mid-1989, the number of people aged 16 years or over in each of the Training Agency area office areas in Scotland was as follows:

	Number
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	587,900
Lothian and Borders	688,800
Lanarkshire	392,500
Highlands and Islands	214,700
Grampian and Tayside	718,200
Glasgow city	560,800
Central and Fife	490,700
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	415,800
Scotland	4,069,500

Information on unemployment by duration for the eight Scottish Training Agency area office areas, is available on the NOMIS database in the House of Commons Library. Library staff are ready to assist in accessing the information if necessary.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the average unit cost per week to the Training Agency of one (i) employment training place and (ii) youth training place in each of *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training agents in employment training who have achieved approved training agent status in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table.

Training Agency area and Training Agents with approved training organisation status—

Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll:
- Intrain

Lothian and Borders:
- The Training Agency Ltd.
- Greater Edinburgh Training Association
- Borders regional council

Lanarkshire:
- Lanarkshire Training Agent Ltd.

Highlands and Islands:
- Orkney Islands Council
- Community Industry
- Support Training
- Highland Training and Development

Grampian and Tayside
- Grampian regional council

Glasgow city:
- None

Central and Fife:
- None

Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway:
- Wigtown District Council
- Dumfries and Galloway regional council—education department

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total Training Agency budget for employment training in the years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, the actual expenditure in 1989-90, and the projected expenditure for 1990-91, for each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested for 1989-90 and 1990-91 is set out in the table. Information about budgets for 1991-92 is not available.

	1989-90 Profile £ million	1989-90 Actual expenditure £ million	1990-91 Budget £ million	1990-91 Forecast outturns[1] £ million
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	6·462	6·668	8·031	6·761
Lothian and Borders	8·052	9·810	10·946	9·647
Lanarkshire	6·376	6·773	7·619	6·540
Highlands and Islands	2·334	2·615	2·923	2·898
Grampian and Tayside	5·495	6·097	7·441	7·142
Glasgow City	12·048	12·384	14·819	14·074
Central and Fife	7·368	7·461	8·147	7·789
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	8·719	8·732	8·872	8·044

[1] Includes energy top up grants and higher technology national training.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training agents and training managers in employment training in Scotland who have had their contracts terminated, together with an explanation of why these contracts have been terminated.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No training agent or training manager has had its employment training contract terminated. All training agents and training managers in employment training who chose to conclude their employment training contracts did so in mutual agreement with the Training Agency.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers and percentages of trainees leaving employment training to (i) take up full-time employment, (ii) take up full-time education, (iii) join a job club and (iv) other reasons, listing these other reasons, for every month from January in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest date for which information is available is May 1990. The information from January 1990 to that date is shown in the tables.

Month	Per cent. of trainees who take up full time employment	Per cent. of trainees who take up full time education or training	Per cent. of trainees who join a job club	Per cent. of trainees who leave for other reasons
Training Agency Area: Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll				
January	24	0	6	70
February	28	1	7	64
March	29	0	5	66
April	29	2	5	64
May	32	3	4	61
Training Agency Area: Lothian and Borders				
January	19	1	4	76
February	26	1	6	67
March	24	2	5	69
April	18	2	2	78
May	28	2	6	64
Training Agency Area: Lanarkshire				
January	26	2	6	66
February	17	2	3	78
March	20	1	6	73
April	28	2	3	67
May	19	2	5	74
Training Agency Area: Highlands and Islands				
January	44	4	5	47
February	45	3	2	50
March	50	0	1	49
April	51	1	1	47
May	55	0	2	43
Training Agency Area: Grampian and Tayside				
January	30	3	4	63
February	25	1	8	66
March	29	1	5	65
April	30	1	3	66
May	28	4	1	67
Training Agency Area: Glasgow City				
January	20	0	8	72
February	17	2	6	75
March	25	1	7	67
April	24	0	2	74
May	26	4	7	63
Training Agency Area: Central and Fife				
January	20	1	5	74
February	20	2	12	66
March	26	0	6	68
April	27	1	8	64
May	27	1	3	69

Month	Per cent. of trainees who take up full time employment	Per cent. of trainees who take up full time education or training	Per cent. of trainees who join a job club	Per cent. of trainees who leave for other reasons
Training Agency Area: Dumfries and Galloway				
January	20	2	8	70
February	30	2	3	65
March	24	0	6	70
April	25	3	4	68
May	29	3	3	65

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current Training Agency budgets for (i) employment training and (ii) youth training in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table.

Training Agency area	Employment training budget allocation 1990-91 £	Youth training budget allocation 1990-91 £
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	8,031,343	11,202,001
Lothian and Borders	10,946,226	15,162,000
Lanarkshire	7,618,981	11,588,000
Highlands and Islands	2,923,450	5,118,000
Grampian and Tayside	7,440,606	13,230,056
Glasgow city	14,819,319	15,162,000
Central and Fife	8,147,405	13,712,364
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	8,872,450	11,395,000

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were in training as (i) employment trainees and (ii) youth trainees in each month since January in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow city, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway ; and if he will provide a breakdown of these figures into (i) numbers of males, (ii) numbers of females and (iii) numbers aged 18 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years and over 55 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Insofar as it is available, the information requested is set out in the table.

	Employment training trainees in training January to March 1990			Youth training trainees in training January to March 1990				
	January 1990	February 1990	March 1990	January 1990	February 1990	March 1990		
						Male	Female	Total
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	3,379	3,476	3,417	5,685	5,576	3,498	2,091	5,589
Lothian and Borders	3,493	3,489	3,460	5,412	5,408	3,642	1,782	5,424
Lanarkshire	2,880	2,947	2,884	4,908	4,821	2,901	1,947	4,848
Highlands and Islands	1,220	1,210	1,203	2,385	2,411	1,523	877	2,402
Grampian and Tayside	2,844	2,994	3,108	7,015	6,903	4,426	2,508	6,934
Glasgow city	5,908	6,011	6,279	7,992	7,881	5,115	2,853	7,968
Central and Fife	2,857	2,748	2,590	6,681	6,631	3,839	2,866	6,705
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	3,316	3,375	3,439	5,261	5,210	3,103	2,176	5,279

Notes:

1. Information for April 1990 onward is not available.
2. Breakdowns of the data between males and females is available for youth training in March 1990 only.
3. Breakdowns by age group are not available.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the training managers in employment training who achieved approved training manager status in each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table:

Training Agency Area
Training Manager with Approved Training Organisation Status

Renfrew, Dunbarton and Argyll
Intec (Inverclyde) Limited
BEST Limited
RRW Associates (Renfrew Dumbarton and Argyll) Limited
Argyll and Bute District Council

Lothian and Borders
University of Edinburgh
Community and Business Training Ltd
Craigmillar Festival Society
Wester Hailes Management Agency
Hotel and Catering Training Board
Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers
Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
Instant Muscle (Scotland) Ltd
Ness Training Limited

Borders Training Services
Livingston Development Corporation
Grand Met Community Services Trust
Training and Development (Edinburgh) Ltd
Reid Consultants Ltd
Trust Training
Scottish Council for Spastics
Scottish Association for Mental Health
Apex Scotland
Edinburgh District Engineering Training Association

Lanarkshire
Clydesdale District Council
OSCC Training Services Ltd
ASTRA
JHP Training
Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare Training Ltd
RRW Associates (Hamilton) Ltd
East Kilbride District Council
East Kilbride Energy Project Ltd
Hamilton District Council
Scottish National Council for YMCAs
Midscot Training Services
LAGTA Ltd
Westwood Training Services Ltd (Withdrawn)

Highlands and Islands
Moray Firth GTA
Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board
Highland Regional Council
Ross and Cromarty District Council
Westwood Training Services (Withdrawn)
Simpson Dalgarno Partnership
Microcomputer Training Centre
McDermott Scotland Ltd
Orkney Islands Council
JHP Training Ltd

Grampian and Tayside
Highland Perthshire Development Company
Bulloch Trust Enterprise Ltd
St. Andrew's Business Association Ltd
Heat Development (Dundee) Ltd.

Training Agency Area
Training Manager with Approved Training Organisation Status

Grampian and Tayside (cont.)
Voluntary Services Aberdeen
Moray District Council

Glasgow City
Henry Boot Training Ltd
Glasgow Zoo
Glasgow Training Group (Motor Trade) Ltd
Queens College Glasgow Enterprise Ltd
University of Glasgow
Epilepsy Association of Scotland

Central and Fife
Tektra Managing Agency Ltd
Falkirk AT Enterprises (FATE) Ltd
Metcom Training Ltd

Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway
Wigtown District Council
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council Consortium
Garnock Workspace
Employment Training Sponsors (Scotland) Ltd
Training Services Ayrshire Ltd
Care Ayrshire Training Ltd.
Radix Training (Scotland) Ltd

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of people *(a)* starting employment training and *(b)* leaving employment training for each month from January for each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is set out in the table for the period January 1990 to March 1990. Information from April 1990 is not available.

	(a) Number starting employment training with a training manager			*(b) Number leaving Employment Training*		
	January 1990	*February 1990*	*March 1990*	*January 1990*	*February 1990*	*March 1990*
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	500	669	771	444	551	777
Lothian and Borders	482	678	846	567	634	777
Lanarkshire	469	623	691	483	561	782
Highlands and Islands	191	264	241	150	274	291
Grampian and Tayside	431	660	805	469	533	633
Glasgow city	902	1,269	1,545	806	1,162	1,277
Central and Fife	423	457	582	458	587	657
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	486	661	809	478	637	749

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) in the Greater Glasgow health board, on what basis the number of rehabilitation personnel for children with special needs is assessed; when the position was last reviewed; and when it will be reviewed again;

(2) if he will request Greater Glasgow health board to determine the number of rehabilitation staff required to fulfil the needs of children in schools for children with special needs;

(3) if he will make additional funds available to Greater Glasgow health board for rehabilitation staff in schools for children with special needs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Services such as speech therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy for children with recorded special educational needs are primarily the responsibility of education authorities, although in practice, they are generally supplied by the health board.

Greater Glasgow health board is currently reviewing its provision of rehabilitation personnel for children with special needs as part of its community health services strategy and expects to issue this for consultation shortly. I have drawn the concerns of the hon. Member to the board's attention. Health boards are given an annual revenue allocation and it is for the boards to decide how best to apportion these resources. A decision on the 1991-92 allocations has not yet been made.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for

Strathkelvin and Bearsden of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *237*, what are the proposed starting dates for the remaining Seafield units.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that at this time no dates have been set by the Greater Glasgow health board for the start of the remaining planned Seafield units.

West Linton Primary School

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that the capital consent to Borders regional council for 1991-92 will be sufficient to replace the primary school at West Linton so as to cater for the private housing developments in the village.

Mr. Lang: Distribution of consents to incur capital expenditure in 1991-92 to local authorities will be announced in February 1991. It will be for Borders regional council to determine what school building work may be required at West Linton in the light of its knowledge of local needs and of the resources available to it.

Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women whose death was caused by lung cancer for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the annual report for 1989 of the Registrar General for Scotland (table C1.1, pp 42-43, ICD9[1] 162); a copy of the report is available in the Library of the House. This year, for the first time, the Registrar General also sent a copy to each Scottish right hon. and hon. Member for reference.

[1] International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of deaths caused by breast cancer for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Deaths from breast cancer, by sex, Scotland 1979-1989

	Male (ICD9[1] 175)	*Female (ICD9[1] 174)*
1979	7	1,176
1980	3	1,214
1981	7	1,175
1982	8	1,228
1983	9	1,262
1984	6	1,242
1985	12	1,252
1986	13	1,313
1987	11	1,234
1988	7	1,261
1989	7	1,356

[1] International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of public sector tenants in arrears with their rent in each district and islands council in Scotland; and if he will give it as a percentage of all tenants in each authority.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table below, which is derived from statistical returns made by local authorities to the Scottish Development Department earlier this year.

Authority	*Number in arrears*[1]	*Percentage of tenants*[2]
Berwickshire	497	21·32
Ettrick and Lauderdale	680	17·81
Roxburgh	677	13·49
Tweeddale	542	39·74
Clackmannan	2,902	36·18
Falkirk	[3]8,000	28·75
Stirling	5,834	52·91
Annandale and Eskdale	n/a	—
Nithsdale	[3]2,800	40·88
Stewartry	964	43·15
Wigtown	302	7·36
Dunfermline	7,774	43·45
Kirkcaldy	7,941	36·23
North East Fife	1,625	26·34
Aberdeen	8,557	23·72
Banff and Buchan	2,993	27·09
Gordon	674	12·32
Kincardine and Deeside	504	14·24
Moray	1,602	16·76
Badenoch and Strathspey	179	17·95
Caithness	1,254	33·65
Inverness	2,017	31·89
Lochaber	307	11·46
Nairn	166	15·70
Ross and Cromarty	2,904	48·89
Skye and Lochalsh	300	36·81
Sutherland	229	13·36
East Lothian	5,911	45·95
Edinburgh	14,600	33·54
Midlothian	3,257	32·52
West Lothian	3,433	18·41
Argyll and Bute	2,093	27·59
Bearsden and Milngavie	n/a	—
Clydebank	7,815	77·14
Clydesdale	3,391	39·74
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	1,707	45·89
Cumnock and Doon Valley	n/a	—
Cunninghame	7,443	37·48
Dumbarton	5,115	47·55
East Kilbride	224	47·43
Eastwood	203	12·16
Glasgow	78,568	50·80
Hamilton	7,250	36·20
Inverclyde	n/a	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	5,057	33·79
Kyle and Carrick	n/a	—
Monklands	6,435	25·03
Motherwell	15,047	42·45
Renfrew	n/a	—
Strathkelvin	1,501	17·05
Angus	1,394	11·47
Dundee	n/a	—
Perth and Kinross	3,917	29·37
Orkney Islands	n/a	—
Shetland Islands	818	31·89
Western Isles	837	35·78

[1] Number of local authority dwellings in respect of which tenants were in arrears of rent at 31 March 1990.
[2] Percentage of local authority dwellings in respect of which tenants were in arrears of rent at 31 March 1990.
[3] Approximate figures.

Registers (Sale of Information)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will describe the pricing structures surrounding *(a)* the sale of information from the electoral register and *(b)* the community charges register, and give the reasons why it was decided to use different pricing structures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Certain persons may obtain a limited number of copies of the electoral register free of charge. Additional copies for such persons, or copies for a returning officer or a local authority are provided at a charge of 25p per thousand entries. In all other cases the fee is £2·50 per thousand entries. There is no provision for the sale of the community charge register.

Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was or is the planned expenditure for Scotland at 1990-91 prices for training in 1989-90, 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94;

(2) expressed in 1990-91 prices, what was or will be the combined budget for expenditure in Scotland by the Scottish Development Agency, Highlands and Islands Development Board and Training Agency or successor bodies in 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92;

(3) what the expenditure in 1988-89 on the Scottish Development Agency, Highlands and Islands Development Board and Training Agency or their successor bodies would be in 1991-92, expressed in 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 10 December 1990]:* Expenditure on training by the Training Agency in Scotland has not been planned separately prior to 1991-92. The only indentifiable figures relating to training by the Training Agency in Scotland for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are figures in the supply estimates for the training programmes, Scotland vote (class XV, vote 4) which covers the contribution made by the Industry Department for Scotland towards the expenditure borne on class VI, vote 1 of the Department of Employment in relation to training activities in Scotland.

This provision is intended to reflect that part of the cost of the Department of Employment's training programme for Scotland which can be separately identified. However, it is not a reliable guide to actual expenditure by the Training Agency in relation to its activities in Scotland. Subject to this caveat, the figures are as follows:

Year	*£ million at 1990-91 prices*
1989-90	298·8
1990-91	267·3

These figures are not directly comparable with provision for expenditure on training by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in connection with training activity in 1991-92 and future years. 1991-92 is the first year for which it will be possible to identify an accurate figure for central Government expenditure in connection with training activity in Scotland.

The component parts of the grant-in-aid for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise for 1991-92 which will be devoted to such activity are still under discussion with them; and will be reflected in due course in the grant-in-aid tables in the supply estimates for the regional and general industrial supports, Scotland vote (class XV, vote 3). However, it is possible now to identify that proportion of the public expenditure provision for 1991-92 which has been transferred to the Scotland programme from the employment programme. That figure is £239·5 million at 1990-91 prices. Comparable figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 will be published, on a cash basis, in due course in the departmental report.

The difficulties referred to above have implications for the validity of any comparisons which combine figures for the Training Agency with those relating to the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. Subject to this important proviso, the information sought is set out in the table:

	£ million
1988-89	447·8
1989-90	515·8
1990-91	494·9
1991-92	463·7

Notes:

1. Resources for training include provision for expenditure on the Technical and Vocational Education initiative, which will be the responsibility of the Industry Department for Scotland from 1 April 1991.
2. The figures for 1990-91 are for planned expenditure rather than for forecast expenditure because it would be particularly misleading to equate estimated outturn on Class XV, Vote 4 with forecasts of actual expenditure by the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Advertising

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish a table showing the amount spent in each of the last five years by his Department on *(a)* advertising in the press, *(b)* advertising on television and radio, *(c)* other advertising and promotion and *(d)* promotion videos and sound cassettes.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* Expenditure by the Scottish Office in 1989-90 on newspaper advertising, television and radio, printed and other material and information videos was £1,022,000, £1,059,000, £995,000 and £96,000.

The corresponding figures for 1988-89 were £378,000, £617,000, £887,000 and £46,000.

Prior to 1988-89 an analysis of expenditure was not maintained in the form requested. Total expenditure on information publicity for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 was £677,000, £857,000 and £1,094,000.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average value, in the last 12-month period for which records are available, of passport benefits for income support recipients *(a)* including housing benefit and community charge benefit and *(b)* excluding these two benefits.

Miss Widdecombe: Comprehensive information is not available on the basis requested; and, in particular, relevant information about community charge benefit is not yet available.

In any event, it would not be meaningful to try to average the value of all the passport benefits across all income support recipients. Some of the passport benefits are not relevant to everyone who is receiving income support. For example, free welfare milk and free school meals are available only where there are children in the

family; and for some other passport benefits the value depends on the extent to which people need to make use of them, such as, exemption from NHS charges and payments from the social fund.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give a breakdown of the deductions of income support for other purposes at 31 August as stated in his answer of 4 December.

Miss Widdecombe: Further to my answer of 4 December, the deductions from income support for other purposes at 31 August cover the following direct payments:

	£
Rent arrears and service charges for fuel or water paid with, or as part of, rent	78,917
Mortgage interest	7,420
Water charges	45,155
Residential care homes, nursing homes or hostels	3,179

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his answers of 27 November, *Official Report*, columns 365-6, regarding income support, what further specifics concerning circumstances he requires for these comparisons to be made, assuming there had been no change in the previous supplementary benefit scheme.

Miss Widdecombe: Even if the value of benefit in respect of housing costs were excluded, information would still be required to enable an assessment to be made of the additional requirements each beneficiary may have received under the supplementary benefit scheme—for example, the exact age of the claimants and any partner or children, their state of health and whether this meant they had to follow any special diet, needed extra baths or wore out their clothing unusually quickly, what laundry facilities were available and the size and condition of the accommodation. This list is by no means exhaustive but serves to illustrate the complexities of the old scheme and the intrusive questioning necessary to determine entitlement.

Further information would also be required to determine whether each individual satisfied the conditions for receipt of a range of other social security benefits, and, if so, at what level.

Furthermore, it is increasingly unrealistic to attempt to make such comparisons on the assumption that, if it were still operating, there would have been no changes whatsoever to the supplementary benefit scheme over the period since 1988. Such an approach would produce results which would be misleading at best and, at worst, almost meaningless.

Child Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost in 1991-92 of *(a)* increasing one-parent benefit in line with inflation, and *(b)* paying the full £1 per week increase in child benefit to each of the child dependency increases for which there is to be a claw-back and for guardian allowance and child's special allowance.

Mr. Jack: The information is as follows:

(a) £14 million;
(b) £5 million.

Note: The figures are net of savings from income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Child Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost per year if there was a full child benefit disregard for recipients of income support.

Mr. Jack: The net cost of disregarding child benefit in the assessment of income support (assuming that the principle of alignment were to be maintained with housing benefit and community charge benefit) is estimated to be in excess of £1 billion a year.

Deductions at Source

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Greenock and Port Glasgow in receipt of income support are having deductions made at source in order to pay *(a)* poll tax arrears and *(b)* crisis loan repayments.

Miss Widdecombe: The information at 30 November is as follows:

	Deductions for Community Charge Arrears	*Crisis loan Repayments*
Greenock	486	263
Port Glasgow	241	164

Carers

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what types of carers will be helped by the proposed introduction of a carers premium;

(2) what types of carers have been helped by the introduction of the carers premium; and how many have been helped.

Miss Widdecombe: The carer premium was introduced from 1 October this year for people claiming income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit who are getting invalid care allowance. It also goes to people who have claimed that allowance since October but could not be paid because they had another, more valuable, benefit. We estimate that 30,000 people will be helped in this way. We have recently announced that from October next year, the premium will continue for up to eight weeks after the caring role ceases. Regulations will be brought before the House in due course.

Residential Homes

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many elderly persons have been placed in a local authority home in cases where supplementary income support for board and lodging payments to elderly people of limited or no means in private or voluntary residential and nursing homes is inadequate or insufficient to pay the costs in the last year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not collected centrally.

Pensions

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been, and what is currently being done to make additional financial provision for pensioners whose sole income is provided by their state pension.

Miss Widdecombe: Any pensioner whose income and capital falls below a prescribed level can claim income-related benefits. If a pensioner is in receipt of the maximum amount of basic state retirement pension only (with no additions) they would be entitled to income support and therefore would also be entitled to receive maximum housing benefit and maximum community charge benefit.

From October 1989, we directed an extra £200 million a year to elderly and disabled pensioners through improvements in the premium structure common to income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit. This was in addition to the normal uprating for that year. From April 1991, we will also be increasing the ordinary pensioner premium (pensioners aged 60 to 74) over and above the normal uprating at a cost of around £80 million. This will directly benefit about 400,000 pensioners on income support and well over 1·5 million others who receive housing benefit and community charge benefit.

21. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost of uprating the basic pension by £13 for a single person and £20 for a couple.

Miss Widdecombe: Pursuant to the reply given by my hon. Friend the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 19 November at column *56*, I regret that some of the information given was incorrect.

The rise in the NI contributions paid by an employee on average earnings would be approximately £2·78 per week, not £2·93 per week.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research his Department has carried out into the household costs of motor neurone disease.

Mr. Scott: This Department has not carried out any specific research into the household costs of motor neurone disease.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether his Department has received any representations concerning the additional costs associated with motor neurone disease.

Mr. Scott: This Department has not received any representations specifically concerning the additional costs associated with motor neurone disease.

Transitional Protection

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants are still in receipt of the transitional protection following the benefit changes in 1988.

Miss Widdecombe: Shortly after last April's uprating of benefits, about 110,000 income support claimants were receiving transitional additions. In November this year, about 52,000 people were receiving housing benefit transitional payments.

Blind People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people whose main disabling condition is listed as blindness or disease of the eye receive attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many registered blind people are entitled to the severe disability premium out of the number who live alone.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to change the guidance notes for doctors in the attendance allowance board's handbook, in particular those clauses related to *(a)* longstanding blindness and attendance allowance and *(b)* gradual blindness and attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: A handbook containing guidance notes for the delegated medical practitioners who deal with attendance allowance is produced, by the Attendance Allowance Board, which is independent of the Department of Social Security. I understand that the board is revising this handbook and will look at its guidance on blindness as part of that process.

Personal Pension Schemes

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated amount payable to personal pension schemes in 1991-92, distinguishing between the contracted-out rebate, the 2 per cent. inducement and tax relief on the rebate.

Miss Widdecombe: On the assumption that, by the end of 1990-91, the number of people with personal pensions is 4·5 million, the Government Actuary estimates that the revenue forgone in 1991-92 will be £1,730 million for the contracted-out rebate, £600 million for the 2 per cent. incentive, and £200 million for the tax relief on the rebate.

Visual Impairment

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people receive attendance allowance solely on the basis of visual impairment.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

One-parent Benefit

Miss Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be saved from freezing one-parent benefit in 1991-92.

Mr. Jack: Pursuant to the reply given by my hon. Friend the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 20 November at column *108*, I regret that some information has been found to be incorrect. The correct answer is that not uprating one-parent benefit in 1991-92

saves £23 million on the benefit itself but results in increased spending on income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit. The net saving is £14 million.

Benefits (Kilmarnock)

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Kilmarnock in receipt of social security benefits are having deductions made at source for *(a)* poll tax arrears and *(b)* loan repayments.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Income support is the only social security benefit from which deductions for community charge arrears may be made. The number of deductions at 30 November 1990 was 536.

The number of social fund loans being recovered from income support customers in Kilmarnock at 30 November 1990 was 1,648.

HEALTH

Pay and Prices

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the price indices, disaggregated to the maximum extent possible to match the economic category analysis of the public expenditure White Paper, which underlay his Department's estimates of pay and price inflation over the period 1974-75 to 1988-89; together with the economic category weights for each year used in the calculation of pay and prices indices for *(a)* national health service total, *(b)* hospital and community health service current, *(c)* family practitioner service current and *(d)* personal social services current and capital.

Mr. Dorrell: The following tables give the information which is readily available, disaggregated as far as possible to match the economic categories in the public expenditure White Paper.

Table 1

NHS gross spending and proportion of NHS total specific index 1975-76 to 1988-89—Sub-programme specific price indices

	HCHS current price index	*Percentage of total*	*NHS capital price index*	*Percentage of total*	*FPS current price index*	*Percentage of total*	*NHS price index*
1975-76	28·8	71·0	30·6	7·7	28·4	21·3	28·8
1976-77	13·8	71·0	12·0	7·3	11·2	21·7	13·1
1977-78	8·6	71·9	14·3	5·9	8·6	22·3	8·9
1978-79	9·6	71·5	11·7	5·9	13·2	22·6	10·5
1979-80	20·5	72·0	20·7	5·6	18·3	22·5	20·0
1980-81	28·0	72·6	25·9	5·8	22·4	21·6	26·7
1981-82	8·2	71·4	3·2	6·3	10·8	22·2	8·5
1982-83	6·5	70·4	1·6	6·0	8·3	23·6	6·6
1983-84	5·1	70·1	2·0	5·9	5·1	24·0	4·9
1984-85	5·8	69·2	4·2	6·2	7·3	24·6	6·1
1985-86	5·2	69·0	5·9	6·5	5·0	24·5	5·2
1986-87	6·9	68·9	5·0	6·6	5·2	24·5	6·4
1987-88	8·5	69·1	5·1	6·2	7·1	24·7	7·9
1988-89	10·5	68·8	5·8	6·0	9·8	25·2	10·0

Notes:

1. Figures underlying the indices and percentages for 1978-79 and later years are not directly comparable with figures for 1977-78 and earlier years because of the inclusion, since 1978-79 of direct credits and of differences in the composition of different parts of the programme.
2. The indices shown above cover over 90 per cent. of NHS expenditure. Specific indices are not available for Central Health and Miscellaneous Services and Departmental Administration.
3. Expenditure on HCHS current and FPS current falls into economic categories (i) and (ii) in the annual Public Expenditure White Paper; expenditure on NHS capital falls into economic category (vii).

Table 2

HCHS index disaggregated to show pay and prices separately

	Percentage increase over previous year	*Weighting percentage*
1983-84		
Pay	5·0	73·9
Price	5·3	26·1
Overall	5·1	
1984-85		
Pay	5·8	73·5
Price	5·8	26·5
Overall	5·8	
1985-86		
Pay	5·4	72·5
Price	4·7	27·5
Overall	5·2	
1986-87		
Pay	8·2	72·6
Price	3·2	27·4
Overall	6·9	
1987-88		
Pay	9·6	72·6
Price	5·7	27·4
Overall	8·5	
1988-89		
Pay	12·5	73·6
Price	4·7	26·4
Overall	10·5	

Table 3

PSS pay and prices index

Year	*Percentage increase over previous year*
1975-76	20·3
1976-77	13·3
1977-78	9·6
1978-79	8·3
1979-80	17·9

Year	Percentage increase over previous year
1980-81	20·2
1981-82	12·4
1982-83	7·2
1983-84	5·4
1984-85	4·1
1985-86	5·6
1986-87	4·8
1987-88	7·4
1988-89	6·7

Hospital Beds

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of beds available within Mid Surrey and East Surrey area health authorities for 1980, 1985 and 1990 or latest available date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table.

Average number of beds available daily.

District Health Authority	1980	1985	1989-90
Mid Surrey	2,835	2,275	1,872
East Surrey	2,666	2,267	1,539

A large proportion of this reduction in beds is a result of the successful implementation of the policy of care in the community for the mentally ill and handicapped. Over the period 1979 to 1989-90, there has been an increase in the numbers of patients treated of 18·5 per cent. in mid-Surrey and 26·1 per cent. in east Surrey.

Nurses

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of *(a)* holidays and *(b)* sickness days taken by nurses in each of the years 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not available centrally.

Since 1974, the annual leave entitlement for qualified nurses has been five weeks a year. Unqualified nursing staff receive four weeks, with an additional two days after five years' service and a further three days after 10 years' service. Staff are also entitled to 10 paid public holidays. Prior to 1974, entitlements varied for different groups of staff and for some groups included public holidays.

Village Hospitals (Closure)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many village hospitals have been closed in the Mid-Surrey and East Surrey area health authorities between 1979 and 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There have not been any small hospital (less than 50 beds) closures between 1979 and 1989 in Mid Surrey district health authority. East Surrey closed three small hospitals, Bletchingley hospital (43 beds), Horley hospital (15 beds) and the old East Surrey hospital (48 beds). Services are being concentrated at the new East Surrey district general hospital.

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he will take to account for the movement of people into metropolitan centres providing specialist treatment for HIV and AIDS in determining the charging system between health authorities for treatment of out-of-area patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Earmarked funds to the national health service for the treatment and care of people with HIV infection and AIDS are distributed on the basis of the numbers of live AIDS cases reported in each region. This method of allocation is to continue for 1991-92.

We are exploring what changes will be needed in arrangements for funding the provision of services for AIDS treatment and care post 1991-92 to take account of the new purchaser-provider functions of health authorities.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many specialist AIDS facilities there are in London.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The majority of acute hospitals in the London area now have experience in looking after people with HIV infection and AIDS. Of these, Westminster (St. Stephen's), St. Mary's, the Middlesex, the Central Middlesex and the Royal Free hospitals have found the need to establish designated beds for the treatment of HIV because of high prevalence in their catchment areas.

In addition, a range of voluntary sector bodies provide community care for people with HIV and AIDS and have been given substantial Government financial support to assist them in this.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has made in relation to the practice of insurance companies of sometimes not revealing the result of an HIV test to an applicant for life insurance who has undergone a test at the company's request.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have discussed with the Association of British Insurers the procedures which insurers follow when asking an applicant for life insurance to have an HIV test. The Association of British Insurers has also discussed this issue with the Terrence Higgins Trust. The Association of British Insurers produced guidance in 1988 which laid out recommended procedures for counselling, and provided advice on the disclosure of a positive result to an applicant for life insurance. I understand from the Association of British Insurers that it intends to revise its guidance to include advice on the disclosure of negative results.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Government have reconsidered their response to the recommendation in the seventh report from the Social Services Committee in Session 1988-89 that issuers should not ask proposers for life insurance whether they have ever had a test for HIV; and what steps the Government have taken since the publication of the report to consider with the insurance industry the effects of asking proposers whether they have ever had a test for HIV.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 11 December at column *363*.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Government intend to initiate a voluntary or compulsory process of contact tracing for HIV.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no plans to institute a mandatory procedure for contact tracing for HIV. It has always been the policy of staff of genito-urinary medicine clinics to counsel people who are HIV-positive of the desirability of informing their partners. Handling must be at the discretion of the staff of the clinics; the wishes of the person concerned are, and must remain, paramount.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds are paid to the voluntary sector for HIV-AIDS work, other than direct grants from his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department makes substantial sums available to both health and local authorities for services for people affected by AIDS-HIV. Authorities are able to use these funds to make grants to voluntary groups in the AIDS field. However this is a matter for local discretion and the Department does not hold central records of such grants made.

Life Insurance (High-risk Groups)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has made to insurance companies in the United Kingdom in connection with references in the supplementary questionnaire for life insurance applications to high-risk groups established by health authorities; and what consideration he has given, in relation to public education on the risk of HIV infection, about the relative merits of reference to high-risk groups and to high-risk behaviour.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We occasionally hear of letters from insurers which imply, or are taken to imply, that the Government require insurers to send supplementary lifestyle questionnaires to applicants for life insurance. This is not the case, and we bring cases that come to our attention to the Association of British Insurers so that it can take the matter up with the company involved. We no longer refer to risk groups, as it is a person's behaviour which determines whether they are at risk of contracting HIV, not their membership of a particular group in society. Our public education campaign messages reflect this.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure the publication of statistics regarding the operation of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990; and what statistics will be published.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Under section 7 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority is required to send to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State an annual report on the authority's activities. It will be for the authority itself to decide whether and how to publish any statistics.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that the public are consulted prior to licences being issued under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Responsibility for licensing arrangements will rest with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority which was established under section 5 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act. The Act does not require the authority to consult the public prior to the issue of licences.

Abortion

205. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to ensure that doctors aborting babies of 24 weeks' gestation and more attempt to preserve the baby's life.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The decision as to the most suitable method of treatment in any particular case is a matter for the clinical judgment of the doctor concerned in the light of all the relevant clinical issues and circumstances of the case.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the complication rate associated with mothers undergoing an abortion in the NHS as compared with those undergoing abortion in a private clinic.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information is in the following table:—

Complications of legal abortions to residents and non residents 1989 (England and Wales)

	All Gestations			
	NHS Rates per 1,000 abortions		*Non-NHS Rates per 1,000 abortions*	
Reported Complication Total	544	7·68	91	0·80
Sepsis	35	0·49	2	0·02
Haemorrhage	211	2·98	27	0·24
Perforation	120	1·69	43	0·38
Other	178	2·51	19	0·17

This information is derived from the notification forms submitted to the chief medical officer. The Department has sponsored a long-term prospective study by the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists into this matter. Some results were published in 1985 in the *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners*, vol. 35, pages 175-180, appendix III, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies his Department has conducted of the reasons for the rise in the abortion rate from 1969 to 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No studies on this specific issue have been funded by the Department.

RU 486 Abortion Pill

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what studies his Department has conducted or is aware of concerning the effect on the mental health of the mother of the RU 486 abortion pill;

(2) in what percentage of cases the use of the RU 486 abortion pill caused abortion without recourse to any further methods of abortion;

(3) if he will list known short-term side effects on the mother of the RU 486 abortion pill;

(4) in what percentage of cases the use of the RU 486 abortion pill is supplemented by the use of *(a)* prostaglandins, *(b)* surgical methods and *(c)* both of these;

(5) what information he has on the effects on the unborn child of the RU 486 abortion pill in those cases where abortion does not occur;

(6) if he will list the known long-term side-effects on the mother of the RU 486 abortion pill.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the manufacturer of RU 486 has applied for a product licence under the Medicines Act. Section 118 of that Act precludes the disclosure of any information relating to a produce licence application. However, studies in the use of RU 486 are well documented in the *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, June 1990, Vol. 97, pp 480-486 and in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, March 8 1990, Vol. 322, No. 10 pp 645-648, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Day Surgery Facilities

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he intends to issue any guidelines about the proportion of new day surgery facilities which may be used for *(a)* private and *(b)* national health service patients.

Mr. Dorrell: This is a matter for local decision.

Mentally Disordered Offenders

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the review of services for mentally disordered offenders.

Mr. Dorrell: A review of health and social services for mentally disordered offenders is being undertaken jointly by the Department and the Home Office. We have appointed a steering committee, whose terms of reference are:

"To plan, co-ordinate and direct a review of the Health and social services provided in England by the NHS, Special Hospitals Service Authority, and local authorities for mentally disordered offenders (and others requiring similar services without having come before the courts), with a view to determining whether changes are needed in the current level, pattern, or operation of services and identifying ways of promoting such changes, having regard to:

the development of new management arrangements in the NHS and the proposals for the development of community care;

the implications for NHS forensic psychiatry of action to follow up the report of the Home Office Efficiency Scrutiny on the Prison Medical Service;

any relevant recommendations of the inquiry into the Strangeways prison disturbances (the Woolf Inquiry and other prison-related inquiries);

and including consideration of:

present arrangements for funding services and service developments, and their possible improvement;

relevant research studies.

To produce regular reports to the Department of Health and the Home Office on the progress of the review and its findings, together with its recommendations.

The review will be essentially concerned with assessing how services should be developed within the framework of existing legislation. It is not intended as a review of the law. However, the steering committee may propose amendments to the law if it considers that they would materially further the longer-term objectives of the review."

The following have been appointed to membership of the steering committee:

Dr. J. L. Reed (Senior Principal Medical Officer, Department of Health) *(Chairman)*
Mr. R. Baxter (Grade 5, Home Office) *(Joint Secretary)*
Professor R. S. Bluglass (Professor of Forensic Psychiatry, University of Birmingham)
Miss E. A. Crowther (Director of Social Services, City of London)
Mr. A. J. Davies (Director of Operations, Special Hospitals Service Authority)
Mr. A. H. Fender (Director of Strategic Planning, Wessex Regional Health Authority)
Professor J. Gunn (Department of Forensic Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry)
Mr. P. R. Herring (Director of Finance, St. Helens and Knowsley Hospital Trust)
Mr. I. Jewesbury (Grade 5, Department of Health) *(Joint Secretary)*
Mr. L. R. Joyce (Unit General Manager, Mental Illness Care Group, Newcastle Health Authority)
Dr. J. O'Grady (Consultant Psychiatrist, Newcastle Health Authority)
Mr. E. Packer (Clerk to Wimbledon Magistrates)
Mr. J. Parry (Senior Nurse Manager, Regional Forensic Services, Mersey Regional Health Authority)
Mr. G. W. Smith (Chief Probation Officer, Inner London Probation Service)
Mr. J. G. Smith (Assistant Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate)
Mr. J. Tait (Principal Nursing Officer, Department of Health)
Dr. Pamela M. Taylor (Director of Medical Services, Special Hospitals Service Authority)
Dr. Rosemary Wool (Director, Prison Medical Service)

Discussions are in progress with the police and prison services about how those interests might be represented.

The committee will begin its work early in the new year. The review is due to be completed by mid-1992.

Disabled People

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will next be reporting under section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Dorrell: I have today laid before the House the report required by section 11 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. This report draws together the major initiatives taken by the Government during 1990 to improve services for people suffering from mental illness and mental handicap.

During 1990, the Government have authorised extra health and social service expenditure of £154 million over three years on services for people with a mental illness.

1. The new mental illness specific grant will support revenue expenditure of £90 million by social service departments.

2. The capital loans fund will provide £50 million to allow health authorities to provide modern facilities to replace long-stay psychiatric hospitals.

3. The Government has authorised £10 million of capital expenditure by local authorities in 1991-92 to develop facilities for the mentally ill.

4. The homeless mentally ill initiative will provide capital expenditure of £4 million to tackle the problem of homeless mentally ill people in London.

In addition to these extra resources, health authorities will be required from April 1991 to have instituted a care programme approach for people being treated in the community. This will ensure that the needs of each patient are assessed and that effective arrangements are made to ensure that those needs are met.

The Government have also announced a review of services for mentally disordered offenders. I am today announcing the membership of a steering committee whose task will be to review provision for mentally disordered offenders to ensure that they receive care and treatment in hospitals designed to meet their needs, rather than finding their way by default into the criminal justice system.

This is a record of progress which demonstrates the Government's commitment to provide high-quality locally based services, which meet the needs of people who suffer from mental illness and mental handicap. I expect to make a statement about the further development of services for people with a mental handicap early in 1991.

Clinical Audit

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to extend the benefits of clinical audit in the national health service beyond the medical and nursing professions.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We welcome efforts by all health care professions to look systematically at the quality and effectiveness of their work. The Department is working with the professional bodies of the clinical psychology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy professions on the development of clinical audit in these fields. Last month, we established an initial research study which will start by examining the feasibility of multidisciplinary audit across these areas. This will report early next year, and will be followed up by further development work. I have no doubt that clinical audit will enable these vital professions to improve the service they give to patients still further, just as it will in medicine and nursing.

Macfarlane Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the source of the funding of the £42 million additional payment through the Macfarlane Trusts; and whether this will be met by a fresh allocation to his departmental budget.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The payment will be made from class XIII, vote 3, as have previous payments to the Macfarlane Trusts and subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for this vote will be increased accordingly.

GPs (Reimbursements)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give an immediate reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside concerning general practitioners' reimbursements.

Mr. Dorrell: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State replied on 14 December.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners have had their reimbursements stopped in Liverpool in each of the past five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We wrote to the chairman of Liverpool family health services authority on 14 December asking her to supply the hon. Member directly with this information about rent and rates reimbursements.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that health authorities and local authorities are enabled to respond quickly to the community care needs of people with motor neurone disease.

Mr. Dorrell: In November 1988, the Department issued guidance to health and local authorities which drew attention to the particular needs of people with progressive neurological conditions including motor neurone disease. The provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and the associated policy guidance are designed to ensure collaboration between authorities in drawing up community care plans and in assessing needs for community care on an individual basis.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what research his Department has carried out into the incidence of motor neurone disease *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other developed countries;

(2) how much his Department spends annually on research into the causes of motor neurone disease;

(3) what research his Department has carried out or commissioned into the causes of motor neurone disease.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not carried out or commissioned research into the causes or the incidence of motor neurone disease. The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's estimate of the number of people who have motor neurone disease.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on the prevalence of motor neurone disease is not collected centrally.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what criteria appointments were made to the board of the London ambulance service; for how long their appointments will last; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The board of the London ambulance service was appointed by South West Thames regional health authority, which has overall responsibility for the London ambulance service. The five board members were chosen for the contributions they could make to the various activities of the LAS. Four were nominated by the Thames regional health authorities, and one member was the chairman of the former ambulance service panel. Each appointment is for two years.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are permissible for ambulance authorities to pay supplemental housing allowances for their chief officers; how many such arrangements have been approved by him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities have discretion to determine local conditions of service for senior national health service managers, including chief ambulance officers, subject to any overriding national agreement or direction. There is no applicable central

agreement providing for housing allowances, nor have Ministers been asked to approve any special arrangements.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will call for a report from the Hertfordshire ambulance service on its practice of charging hospice residents for use of non-emergency services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I understand that Hertfordshire ambulance service is not charging national health service patients for transportation to and from hospices.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings he or officials of his Department have held with the chair and chief officer of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Health met the chairman of the London ambulance service on his appointment, and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health met the chief executive of the LAS in October to discuss general issues. Additionally, the Department's ambulance adviser has regular, informal meetings with the chief executive of the LAS.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice is given to ambulance services concerning the purchase of computer information systems; what compatability exists between systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: General advice on the procurement of information technology has been issued to the national health service.

Decisions on the purchase of equipment for ambulance services rest with local health authority management who would have regard to prevailing local strategies for information systems and value for money.

Hospices

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was paid per year, for each of the last 10 years, by his Department to voluntary hospices, and how much was paid by local health authorities.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information on the level of health authority support for hospices is not available in the form requested, but is currently being collected in respect of recent years. In 1988-89, the Department contributed £1·3 million via health authorities towards the cost of pay awards for hospice nurses, and £400,000 via the charitable trust Help the Hospices, to assist projects in short-term financial difficulty. This year it has made an additional allocation of £8 million to health authorities to enable them to increase the support they give to hospices. It has also made the following direct grants to innovative projects offering a range of services for people with AIDS:

£ thousands

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
London Lighthouse:				
Capital	1,250	—	—	—
Revenue	100	170	300	300
Mildmay Mission Hospital:				
Capital	321	—	—	—
Revenue	29	162	98	—
Commissioning costs	—	94	32	—
Total	1,700	426	430	300

An announcement will be made early in the new year about Government funding for hospices in 1991-92.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will visit the accident and emergency department at King's college hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. Management at Camberwell health authority fully accept that the current situation in the accident and emergency department is unacceptable and is addressing the problems as a matter of urgency. A new facility to accommodate patients who cannot immediately be admitted to a hospital bed will be opened shortly.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the maximum time people stay *(a)* nationally and *(b)* broken down by area in accident and emergency before being admitted to wards or theatres for urgent treatment.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally.

Food Irradiation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he intends to give to hospitals about the use of irradiated food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No specific guidance on the use of irradiated food in hospitals is being issued. In common with all other catering establishments health authorities who choose to use irradiated products will be required to so inform consumers under the requirements of the Food Labelling (Amendment) (Irradiated Food) Regulations 1990.

Terminal Illness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice is given by his Department concerning the definition of appropriate care for the terminally ill between community care and health care; who has the responsibility of resolving any disagreement between local social services and health authorities on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The White Paper, "Caring for People", published in November 1989, makes it clear that health authorities are responsible for the medical and nursing component of care for people who are terminally ill, and that support for hospice care remains with health authorities. Social services authorities have responsibility for arranging the social care and support which may be needed by terminally ill people living in the community. It is for health and local authorities to determine how these responsibilities will be discharged. The Department's policy guidance, "Community Care in the Next Decade and Beyond", published in November 1990, a copy of which is available in the Library, emphasises the need for effective collaboration.

Mental Illness

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost per head in each health region of *(a)* in-patient treatments of mental illness, *(b)* out-patient and day care treatment of mental illness and *(c)* general practitioner-prescribed prescription costs for treatments of stress, anxiety and depression.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* The latest available expenditure data are shown in the table.

Expenditure per head per annum of resident population

Region	*Hospital services—psychiatric other than mental handicap*			*General Practitioner prescribing*
	Patients using a bed	*Outpatients*	*Day care*	
	£	£	£	£
Northern	17·98	1·21	1·34	1·85
Yorkshire	15·77	1·03	1·38	1·80
Trent	16·06	0·81	1·17	1·36
East Anglian	15·81	1·20	1·39	1·17
North West Thames	21·85	1·54	1·02	1·27
North East Thames	20·70	2·03	1·39	1·21
South East Thames	18·45	0·80	1·19	1·33
South West Thames	20·50	1·04	1·10	1·40
Wessex	15·04	0·36	1·14	1·43
Oxford	11·47	0·90	1·23	1·03
South Western	14·86	0·62	1·14	1·55
West Midlands	14·69	0·87	1·02	1·42
Mersey	22·21	0·93	1·23	1·69
North Western	18·61	1·17	1·94	1·82

Sources:

(a) Hospital services—1988-89 financial returns submitted to the Department by district health authorities in England.
(b) General Practitioner prescribing—prescription cost analysis by the Department for 1989 (calendar year).
(c) Mid year estimates of resident populations 1988—Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 20 December 1990

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Westminster County Court

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General why it is proposed that Westminster county court should be closed in the context of proposed transfer of jurisdiction from the High Court to the county court; and what representations he has received against closure.

The Attorney-General: It has been proposed that Westminster county court be closed on the expiry of the lease on the present premises as no suitable alternative accommodation can be found.

It is intended that the court will be merged with the existing Bloomsbury county court and located at new premises to be known as Bloomsbury and Westminster county court.

The premises presently occupied by Bloomsbury county court will be converted into a trial centre for the London county courts in order to hear the additional heavier cases which will be dealt with by the county courts following the new arrangements for the allocation of business.

Some concern was expressed at the initial proposals by various parties, however, following consultation with the judiciary and members of the local court user committee, no written representations against closure have been received.

County Court Trials

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will give details of the county court trial centres which are to be established following the passage of the Courts and Legal Services Act.

The Attorney-General: A total of 74 county court trial centres have already been established in England and Wales, which between them provide continuous trial facilities for over 250 county courts. A further six trial centres are planned. A full list of existing trial centres and those planned will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if county court trial facilities will now be made available at the Royal Courts of Justice.

The Attorney-General: There are no existing plans to use the Royal Courts of Justice for county court trials. Additional facilities for county court trials were established in the court complex at Wood Green in May this year.

Court Rules

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what steps are being taken to approximate the rules of the county court and the High Court.

The Attorney-General: A policy of convergence towards common remedies and procedures has been adopted. This is being given effect through the programme of rule changes which implement the recommendations of the civil justice review.

Jurisdiction

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General if he will publish a timetable for the transfer of jurisdiction from the High Court to the county court.

The Attorney-General: New arrangements for the allocation of business between the High Court and county courts are to be set out in an order made under section 1 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990. Consultation on the content of the order has only recently closed. A formal announcement on the date for implementation will be made once consideration has been given to the various responses.

Courts (Construction)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General what is the current cost of the new High Court building in Bradford; what was the brief given to the architect; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The cost at current prices of the new Crown and county court building at Bradford is approximately £20 million. The architect's brief was to provide eight Crown courtrooms and two county courtrooms with supporting facilities. It is expected that the building will be ready for use in the summer of 1992.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Attorney-General what is the total amount spent on constructing new courts for each of the last 10 years; and if he will give the number of courts and their location for each year.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department is responsible for Crown, county, combined and High Court centres in England and Wales. Magistrates' courts are the responsibility of the Home Office. Details of new Crown, county, combined and High Court centres completed over the past 10 years and their total costs are given in the table. The schemes listed have produced some 250 courtrooms at an average cost of £1·1 million per courtroom.

Court	*Type*	*£ million*[1]
1981		
Snaresbrook	Crown	
Burnley	Crown	
Kings Lynn	Crown	
	Total cost	5.395
1982		
Bolton	Combined	
Porsmouth	Combined	
Chelmsford	Crown	
Leeds	Combined	
	Total cost	26·282
1983		
Southwark	Crown	
Maidstone	Combined	
	Total cost	22·880
1984		
Liverpool	Combined	
	Total cost	45·176

Court	Type	£ million[1]
1985		
Oxford	Combined	
Swindon	Combined	
Brighton	County	
	Total cost	9·103
1986		
Isleworth	Crown	
Milton Keynes	County	
Guildford	Crown	
Manchester Wood Street —Phase 1	Crown	
Peterborough	Combined	
	Total cost	24·284
1987		
Southampton	Combined	
Birmingham	Crown	
Nottingham —Phases 2 and 3	Crown	
	Total cost	22·229
1988		
Norwich	Combined	
Swansea	Crown	
Coventry	Combined	
Telford	County	
Snaresbrook—additional	Crown	
Middlesex Guildhall	Crown	
Truro	Combined	
Grimsby	Combined	
	Total cost	38·862
1989		
Derby	Combined	
Croydon	Combined	
Doncaster	Crown	
	Total cost	21·660
1990		
RCJ—additional	High	
Wood Green—Phase 2	Crown	
Manchester Wood Street —Phases 2 and 3	Combined	
Taunton	Crown	
Wolverhampton	Combined	
Newcastle Quayside	Combined	
	Total cost	56·805
	Grand Total	272·676

[1] Current prices.

Mr. Bill Galbraith

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *211*, concerning the investigation by the Gloucestershire constabulary into comments made by Mr. Bill Galbraith, if he will make a further statement on the results of that investigation and any report that has been submitted to him.

The Attorney-General: The Gloucestershire constabulary has not yet supplied the Crown Prosecution Service with a report concerning its investigation, and so I am not in a position to make a further statement.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Stanbrook: To ask the Attorney-General if he will seek injuctions in the High Court to restrain unlawful Sunday trading during the Christmas and new year period.

The Attorney-General: Parliament has made it the duty of local authorities to enforce the legislation relating to Sunday trading, and I do not at present intend to apply for injunctions.

DEFENCE

Airmisses

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, locations, aircraft involved, altitudes and circumstances of each of the category A airmisses between civil and military aircraft over the United Kingdom in 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are the following category A airmisses between civil and military aircraft over the United Kingdom in 1988:

Date	Location	Aircraft involved	Circumstances[1]	Approximate height
5 January 1988	2 NM[2] S of Whittlesey	Jet Ranger/ Jet Provost	Late sighting by both pilots	300 ft
27 January 1988	1 NM E of Netherthorpe	Cessna/ Tornado	Unauthorised penetration of Netherthorpe air traffic zone by Tornado pilot, compounded by late sighting of Cessna	800 ft
23 February 1988	11 NM W of Beverley	Jet Ranger/ Tornado	Late sighting by Tornado pilot	300 ft
12 April 1988	5 NM N of Dalwhinnie	Hughes 500/ 2 Buccaneers	Failure of Buccaneer crews to see and avoid helicopter in a notified CAN[3] area	250 ft
13 April 1988	4 NM SW of Newtonmore	Hughes 500 F16	Failure of F16 pilot to see and give way to helicopter in a notified CANP area	250 ft
15 April 1988	5 NM S of Newtonmore	Jet Ranger/ Hunter	Failure of Hunter pilot to see and avoid Jet Ranger in a notified CANP area.	600 ft
17 May 1988	7 NM SW of Binbrook	Apache/ Jet Provost	Failure of RAF Waddington radar to disclose Jet Provost	1,800 ft

Date	*Location*	*Aircraft involved*	*Circumstances*[1]	*Approximate height*
20 May 1988	6 NM N of Cosford	Zlin 250L/ Hawk	Late sighting by Hawk pilot leading to late avoiding action	2,000 ft
13 June 1988	10 NM W of York	Jet Provost/ Cessna	Late sighting by both pilots	1,800 ft
30 July 1988	13 NM SW of Lyneham	Cherokee/ Hercules	Failure by two RAF Lyneham air traffic controllers to separate two aircraft they were respectively controlling	1,500 ft
1 August 1988	0·5 NM E of Sutton Meadows	Microlight/ Tornado	Failure of Tornado pilot to see microlight	450 ft
2 September 1988	1 NM NE of Portmoak	Glider/ Buccaneer	Unauthorised penetration of Portmoak glider site by Buccaneer pilot who failed to see and avoid glider	1,700 ft
13 October 1988	7 NM W of Upper Heyford	F-111/ Cherokee	Failure of Cherokee pilot to contact air traffic control at RAF Upper Heyford before flying south of Enstone airfield runway centreline, as required by Letter of Agreement between Enstone and Upper Heyford	2,000 ft.

[1] Based on assessment by joint airmiss working group of cause of airmiss.
[2] NM—Nautical miles.
[3] CANP—Civil aircraft notification procedure.

Air Defence Ground Environment

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there are any plans to use data from the AN/FPS-117 radars at Bolafjall and Gunnolfsvikurfjall in Iceland as real-time input data to the United Kingdom air defence ground environment.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes.

Menwith Hill

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *536*, what information he has received from the United States authorities about why the proposed construction for water storage at Menwith Hill was excluded from the information provided to him for his answer to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) on 6 February, *Official Report*, column *603*.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will write to the hon. Member.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the implications of a comprehensive test ban treaty for his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 127 of the statement on the Defence Estimates 1990.

The Gulf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is being sent out to the Gulf to entertain the troops.

Mr. Alan Clark: Sir Harry Secombe has recently visited the Gulf and Paul Daniels will visit before Christmas. In addition, Combined Services Entertainment arranged a very successful light entertainment show early this month, and further similar shows are planned.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to deploy Gurkhas in the Gulf.

Mr. Alan Clark: A few individual Gurkhas are currently serving in the Gulf. In addition, a Gurkha transport squadron will deploy to the Gulf as part of the reinforcements announced by my right hon. Friend on 22 November.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to place no money restrictions upon the movement or operation of military forces in the Gulf which might in any way jeopardise the safety of personnel.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government are committed to ending Iraq's aggression, and will make whatever contribution is appropriate to secure freedom and justice for Kuwait. We shall ensure that the armed forces deployed to the Gulf are provided with the means necessary to do the job that we ask of them.

Combined Heat and Power

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to ensure that departmental properties and establishments reap the maximum financial and environmental benefits from combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Ministry of Defence is investigating the viability of operating combined heat and power schemes on a number of specific sites.

Recycled Materials and Renewable Energy

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on promoting the use of recycled materials and renewable energies where relevant to his Department's activities.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Government's policy on the use of recycled materials and renewable energy is set out in the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" (Cm 1200). The MOD is about to bring into use a further range of recycled stationery. We aim to send for recycling non-hazardous waste which can be beneficially recycled without disproportionate cost.

We have a long-standing record on the pursuit of energy efficiency and we monitor developments in the field of renewable energy technology. We are studying sites in the United Kingdom which may have potential for wind powered electricity generation.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has recently received from *The Sunday Times* concerning the status of the Iraqi nuclear programme; when the information was passed to his Department; and what steps he has taken to evaluate the information received.

Mr. Alan Clark: We were aware of information contained in *The Sunday Times* article before it was published.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he possesses concerning the capacity of the Al-Qaim uranium processing factory in Iraq.

Mr. Alan Clark: Al-Qaim is a plant to manufacture fertilisers from phosphates mined in the vicinity. It is possible to extract minute quantities of uranium ore which is present in the phosphates as impurities, but we have no knowledge of quantities obtained.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he possesses concerning the activities of scientists from the Qaqaa explosives factory in Iraq in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other member states of the NATO alliance.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have no specific information on the activities of Iraqi scientists from the Qaqaa explosives factory in the United Kingdom or other NATO countries. Scientists from all over the world are free to attend courses and conferences in this and other countries, and many do so.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he possesses concerning the role of factory 10 near Samarra in Iraq in nuclear materials processing.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have no significant information on the role of Factory 10 near Samarra.

Permeameters

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there is any military use in terms of equipment monitoring and testing for permeameters.

Mr. Alan Clark: Permeameters have numerous uses, both civil and military.

Radio Masts, Sennybridge

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has changed his plans to site naval radar/radio masts on His Majesty's land on the Sennybridge range in Brecon and Radnor.

Mr. Alan Clark: A requirement for new defence communication facilities is under consideration, but no decisions on locations have yet been taken. We expect to make a decision in the coming year.

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects a decision to be announced on the siting of naval radar/radio masts for submarine communications on the Sennybridge ranges in Brecon and Radnor.

Mr. Alan Clark: A requirement for new defence communication facilities is under consideration, but no decisions on locations have yet been taken. We expect to make a decision in the coming year.

WALES

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated budget for each of the training enterprise and councils in Wales for *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1991-92; how many people in each training and enterprise council are likely to be trained under (i) youth training and (ii) employment training in 1990-91; what are the comparable figures for the last full year; and what assumptions are made about the number of places to be provided in 1991-92.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Welsh Economy

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was (i) the gross domestic product in Wales and (ii) the income per head in Wales, as percentages of the United Kingdom average in the latest available year.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1988, the total gross domestic product per head for Wales was estimated to be 84·0 per cent. of the United Kingdom average (excluding the continental shelf region). These 1988 figures are provisional and revised set, together with provisional figures for 1989, will be published in the November 1990 issue of *Economic Trends* (No. 445) on 28 December 1990, a copy of which will be placed in the Library.

Wales' total personal income per head in 1988 was provisionally estimated to be 83·9 per cent. of the United Kingdom average while household income per head in that year was provisionally estimated to be 84·6 per cent. of the national figure.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has now achieved his waiting list objectives specified in pages 160 and 161 of the Welsh Office Public Expenditure Commentary for orthopaedics at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar, ophthalmics at Ysbyty Gwynedd and Bangor, and hernias and varicose veins at Bridgend general hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Figures for waiting lists for hernia and varicose vein treatment at Bridgend general hospital are not separately available. At the other hospitals for which information is requested only the waiting times target relating to the out-patient list for trauma and orthopaedic surgery at the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar has thus far been achieved.

Roads

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the major road schemes specified to start in 1990-91 in table 35 of the Welsh Office commentary on public expenditure in Wales 1990-91 to 1992-93 have now commenced.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Work on A55 Rhuallt Hill scheme started in May. The contract for A4060 Pentrebach-Dowlais (Phase 2) was let on the 19 December and work will start in January.

Inward Investment

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list inward investment projects during 1990, specifying the capital investment involved and the number of new jobs created directly.

Mr. David Hunt: Between 1 January 1990 and 30 November 1990, Wales secured 129 inward investment projects involving £484 million of capital investment, promising 7,800 new jobs and safeguarding 7,300 existing jobs. A list of the companies concerned has been placed in the Library of the House though for reasons of commercial confidentiality individual details of investment and jobs are not disclosed.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the additional funding his Department has made to each of the regionally funded renal units in Wales during the current financial year, for the prescribing costs for the drug Erythropoietin; and if he will separately distinguish the number of patients currently receiving such treatment at each unit together with the number of patients refused such treatment because of budgetary constraints on the prescribing consultant.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Information on the number of patients receiving Erythropoietin is not held centrally. During the current financial year additional funds of £75,000 were made available to each of West Glamorgan and Clwyd health authorities to assist with the prescribing of Erythropoietin at the main renal units within those authorities.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the estimated number of patients who would benefit from erythropoietin.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The use of EPO for individual patients is a matter of clinical judgment at the time. No specific representations have been received about the aggregate number of patients who might benefit from its use. Managing health authorities of main renal dialysis units receive central revenue support which includes the cost of drugs at estimated levels of need.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received, and intends to acquire, information from district health authorities on the extent to which the funding provided for the 1991-92 financial year will meet the needs of all patients who fulfil the criteria for benefiting from erythropoietin.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Following the dedesignation of regional services from 1991-92 it will be for district health authorities to determine the resources which should be made available for the prescription of drugs, including erythropoietin.

New Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if his forecast of spend on local authority new build for 1989-90 was achieved.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In 1989-90 local authorities spent £24·031 million on new build schemes. In addition, they chose to transfer capital resources of over £17 million to housing associations, for projects which will provide additional housing units.

Treatment Centres Initiative

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the benefits to patients that could be achieved if the money budgeted for the treatment centres initiative in Wales were to be redirected to increase the rate of treatment of patients in the same specialties at appropriate hospitals throughout Wales, using existing facilities.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Within the United Kingdom, treatment centres are unique to Wales. The purpose of this initiative is to offer to those throughout Wales who have been waiting four months or more the choice of earlier treatment for key disabling conditions. The centre at Rhydlafar has been operating for year. It is too early to establish firm referral patterns.

Once all the centres have completed their first year's operations, it is intended to undertake a wider evaluation of the treatment centre initiative. Initial indications are that the centres are proving to be an effective alternative method of delivering speedier health care for Welsh patients.

Alcohol Misuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what programmes have been developed by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales as that authority's contribution to tackling the problem of alcohol misuse in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The Health Promotion Authority for Wales's national "substance misuse" programme includes action targeted at alcohol misuse in the Principality, in partnership with voluntary and local agencies, eg. health education publications, components of the authority's mobile life education centre units, and support for Drinkwise Day.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his replies of 4 December, *Official Report*, column 74, in regard to alcohol misuse, if he will make it his policy to concentrate the available finances on the provision of local services.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Yes.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has met the chairman of chief executive of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales to discuss the work undertaken in the past, and to be undertaken in the future, by that authority in respect of developing positive approaches to alcohol and discouraging people from misuse of alcohol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Although my right hon. Friend has met both the chairman and chief executive of the authority, he did not discuss programme planning on that occasion. However, his predecessor had several meetings with the authority leading up to the launch of their "Health for All" in Wales strategy document in January 1990. That strategy includes the goal of reducing substantially the misuse of alcohol in the Principality and a series of detailed targets for specific improvements for various age ranges of the population. Action to achieve the strategy's goals and targets will be taken by the authority and a range of other organisations in partnership. The authority will publish a firm three-year action programme in the spring.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the funds available to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales have been allocated *(a)* directly or *(b)* indirectly to work relating to alcohol misuse in each year since the establishment of that authority; and what proportion he intends should be devoted to such purposes in 1991-92.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The following proportions of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales' exchequer budget have been directly allocated to alcohol misuse work:

1987-88—not available.
1988-89—4 per cent.
1989-90—6·5 per cent.
1990-91—1·3 per cent.

Figures are not available for work indirectly relating to alcohol misuse—for example, elements of the heartbeat Wales and cancer programmes. My right hon. Friend had not yet decided the detail of the authority's budget for 1991-92.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales wht level of service, according to what criteria he intends shall be achieved in each county of Wales as a result of the finances his Department is to make available in respect of alcohol abuse.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is for local and health authorities to determine the level of service necessary to combat alcohol misuse in their areas. Central funding will be used to support such local strategies.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what resources he has made available to local authorities in Wales to enable them to tackle breaches of the law by large commercial organisations;

(2) whether he will make it his policy to offer additional resources to local authorities in Wales to enable them to tackle breaches of the legislation regarding Sunday trading by major retail organisations;

(3) what guidance he or his Department has offered to local authorities in Wales on their responsibilities in regard to the enforcement of the legislation which regulates Sunday trading;

(4) what assessment he has made of the impact in Wales of large stores and multiple-outlet retail firms opening on Sunday in contravention of the law during December.

Mr. David Hunt: Enforcement of the law is a matter for local authorities. It is for them to decide how to discharge their duties under the Shops Act 1950.

The provisional local authority revenue settlement for 1991-92 allows for total standard spending of £2,433 million—some 8 per cent. above authorities' 1990-91 budgets. I would expect authorities to be able to meet any additional costs arising from Sundary trading enforcement from within that total.

Homelessness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what new and additional finance he is making available to help *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* voluntary organisations to tackle the problem of homelessness in Wales generally and in Cardiff in particular;

(2) what new initiatives he is taking to tackle the problem of homelessness in Wales in general and Cardiff in particular.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Local authorities will soon be invited to bid against a capital reserve amounting to around £2·9 million for 1991-92. Cardiff will certainly wish to respond. The reserve is designed to complement authorities' own efforts in dealing with cases of homelessness, within the context of the approach to partnership with the housing association sector which is developing strongly in Wales. This is underpinned by our plans to increase the total housing association stock by over a third by 1993-94. The Department's close working contract with voluntary bodies concerned with homelessness will continue. Revenue funding for them has been increased by over 16 per cent. to £460,000 for 1991-2. For districts experiencing particular pressure this year, we intend to make available a further £2 million at least, in support of operationally effective scheme.

Fishing Industry

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of fishermen to discuss their current fishing activities and prospects.

Mr. David Hunt: I met a delegation representing Milford Haven fishing interests on 20 September.

Child Labour

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to assess the extent and seriousness of exploitation of child labour in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None. Any allegations that children are working illegally should be drawn to the attention of the authorities who have responsibility for enforcing the law (including the provisions of local byelaws).

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what fresh initiatives he intends to take to prevent the exploitation of child labour in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Water

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he intends to meet the Director of Water Services to discuss the rise in prices planned by Welsh Water plc;

(2) whether he intends to meet the Director of Water Services to discuss the requirements being placed on Welsh Water plc in respect of the investment needed in Wales on water supply, sewerage and water quality in rivers and on beaches;

(3) whether he intends to meet the Director of Water Services to discuss the expenditure by Welsh Water plc on the purchase of shares in South Wales electricity board.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be meeting the Director General of Water Services in the new year to discuss a number of matters relevant to their responsibilities.

Sprint Programme

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has taken to publicise the European Community Sprint programme along small and medium-sized businesses in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The European Community's Sprint programme is featured in a leaflet included in a Welsh Office business service information pack. These are widely distributed to small and medium-sized businesses throughout Wales through various awareness events and also by my officials in their day to day contact with industry.

Through its involvement with Sprint, the Welsh Development Agency has also promoted the programme to industry.

Llyn Mawr Site, Swansea

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decision he has made on the future of the Llyn Mawr site in Swansea.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend has already written to the right hon. Gentleman to say that he has deferred implementing the direction to West Glamorgan county council to sell the site at Llwynmawr road, Swansea by up to 36 months.

Heat Treatment Works, Abercumboi

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many direct representations he has received in connection with the application by Coal Products Ltd. to build a mild heat treatment works at Abercumboi; and if he will list them.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: It is not possible to obtain the information in the time available, but I will write to my hon. Friend and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Housing Revenue Account Subsidy

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce his initial housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1991-92.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1991-92 for Wales have been made today. They cover the assumptions that the Government will make about rents and management and maintenance and other rules governing the calculation of each authority's subsidy entitlement. I am placing copies of the determinations in the Library.

For rent guidelines, the proposals for an average increase of 2 per cent. above the allowance for inflation are confirmed. This means an average increase of £1·88 and a range of increases from £1·41 to £2·50 per week for individual authorities over the guideline rents which applied this year.

The proposals for management and maintenance expenditure are similarly confirmed. These introduce a system which targets allowances in a way which better reflects the condition of each authority's council stock. This will benefit authorities with the poorest stock while no authority will have a lower allowance per dwelling, in cash terms, than in the current year. Across Wales overall, the average increase in the level of allowances will maintain them at this year's level in real terms.

It is for each council to determine its own rent and how much to spend on the management and maintenance of its stock.

On leasing, subject to some refinement of the rules, the proposals on which we consulted for the Principality covering the amounts of leasing which would attract subsidy within the housing revenue account are also confirmed.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for, or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* The information is given in the table.

Title	*Year*
Survey associated with the Community Nursing Review	1985
Aids knowledge and attitudes survey	1986
Survey by Grigmore into market research in mature entrants to nursing	1987
Welsh Youth Survey—A series of surveys concerned with attitudes on diet, alcohol use, smoking, physical activities, dental health and health beliefs.	1986, 88 & 90
Evaluation of campaigns and training events:	
Combating sex stereotyping in school girls career choice	1987
Drinkwise campaign (Attenders and Organisers)	1989
Quit and Win	1990
Health Lifestyle club	1990
Wales Tourist Board Marketing (Advertisers)	1990
Tourist Brochure Conversion Study	1990
Tourism, Impact Study, Llandrindod Wells Festival (Visitors and Local Residents)	1989
Monitoring of Community Charge Public Information Programme	1989
Review of Development Board for Rural Wales' Business Support Services	1990
Surveys by and on behalf of Cadw—Welsh Historic Monuments:	
Joint Cadw/WTB study of visitor attitudes involving 7 Cadw sites	1985-86
Postal survey of attitudes to 'Heritage in Wales' Membership	1985-86
Easter 1986 visitor study of 10 Cadw sites	1986-87
Survey of Cadw sites on attitudes to interpretative and display facilities	1986-87
Pricing policy and visitor satisfaction survey at 6 Cadw sites	1986-87
Comprehensive General Survey of 8 Cadw sites	1986-87
Survey of visitors to Events at Cadw sites	1987-88
WTB/Cadw survey of Domestic Holiday and Day Visitors to Wales in 1987	1987-88
WTB/Cadw survey of Overseas Holiday and Day Visitors to Wales in 1987	1987-88
Survey of visitors to 'Gerald of Wales' Exhibition in Cardiff	1988-89
Survey of visitors to 'Gerald of Wales' Exhibition at Criccieth	1988-89
Survey of school visits to 'Gerald of Wales' Exhibition in Cardiff	1988-89
Postal survey of school visits to Cadw sites	1988-89

Title	Year
Survey of visitors attitudes to 8 Cadw sites	1989-90
Survey of visitors to Events at Cadw sites	1989-90
Survey of visitors at 5 Cadw shops	1989-90
Postal survey of 'Heritage in Wales' Membership	1989-90
Survey of visitors attitudes to Cadw sites in 2 North Wales resorts and 2 South Wales towns	1990-91
Survey of visitors attitudes to 4 unmanned Cadw sites	1990-91
Current Surveys	
Patient satisfaction survey of the outpatient Department, East Glamorgan Hospital	
Patients' responses to the service provided at the 3 All Wales Treatment Centres	
Attitudes and awareness of environmental issues in a range of companies	

In addition, surveys of local authority housing tenant opinion have been undertaken from time to time, notably in the context of the eight priority estate projects in Wales. The Welsh inter-censal survey 1986 included a question designed to test opinion on house repairs. Housing for Wales completed a survey report on the housing aspirations of young people in rural Wales earlier this year.

Treatment Centres Initiative

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the success or failure of the treatment centres initiative in Wales to date.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 19 December 1990]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him earlier today.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for 1990-91 and 1991-92 the share in percentage terms of income represented by (i) revenue support grant, (ii) the poll tax and (iii) the business rate for *(a)* the country as a whole and *(b)* Stoke on Trent.

Mr. Key: The information requested for 1990-91 is as follows:

Percentage of income received from	*England* per cent.	*Area of receiving authority of Stoke-on-Trent* per cent.
Revenue support grant	29·1	20·6
Receipts from non-domestic rate pool	32·1	36·9
Special grants/safety net adjustment to revenue support grant	0·6	4·1
Budgeted income from community charges (post capping)	38·3	38·4
Of which:		
Community charge benefit	6·0	4·7
Transitional relief grant	1·0	0·8

The percentages for 1991-92 will not be known until all authorities have set their community charges for that year.

Stoke-on-Trent

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will accept the invitation of the leader of Stoke-on-Trent city council to discuss the current lack of any inner-city status for Stoke-on-Trent.

Mr. Key: We will be responding to Councillor Smith'sinvitation shortly.

Special Needs Housing

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the numbers of housing associations, voluntary organisations and other projects which exist to provide accommodation for *(a)* the single homeless, *(b)* the mentally ill and *(c)* those leaving penal institutions or ex-offenders;

(2) if he will give details of the additional funding he has secured to further develop voluntary after-care accommodation provided by housing associations;

(3) what topping-up funding is available to voluntary organisations and housing associations providing special needs accommodation in 1991-92 to the homeless.

Mr. Yeo: Accommodation for people with special needs is to be provided under a number of Government initiatives in 1991-92 including:

3,000 bedspaces funded through the Housing Corporation's approved development programme.

60 short-term bedspaces in the Department of Health's homeless mentally ill programme.

An allocation by the Home Office of £9,179,000 to the voluntary after-care grant scheme.

Further funding by the Department of Social Security of the Resettlement Agency's scheme for replacing resettlement units and the funding of a number of short-term direct access hostels in London for people sleeping rough.

Topping up is provided from a variety of sources, particularly local authorities and health and social services authorities. In addition, the Department of Health will be funding the running costs of the 60 bedspaces referred to above and the Home Office will be providing topping up funds direct to about 130 organisations.

We do not hold an up-to-date or comprehensive list of projects providing accommodation for people with special needs. But I have arranged for the Housing Corporation to write to the hon. Member to see if they can assist her from the information they hold on schemes run by registered housing associations.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the expenditure by his Department on energy efficiency measures since 1983.

Mr. Heseltine: Information on the expenditure of my Department on energy efficiency measures prior to 1989-90 is not available. Expenditure on energy efficiency measures for 1989-90 is estimated to have totalled £120,000.

Homelessness

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what incentives he will give local authorities to bring empty council stock back into use and to work in partnership with housing associations and voluntary organisations seeking to provide accommodation for the homeless.

Mr. Yeo: We have made a special allocation of £300 million over this year and next to local authorities and housing associations in London and the south-east to provide housing for homeless families, in addition to the resources available under the housing investment programme system. A substantial proportion of the special allocation will be used to bring empty property in both sectors back into use. In addition, a further £96 million will be spent over this year and the next two years; mainly through local authorities, in providing hostel and long-term accommodation for single homeless people in central London; I very much hope that all London boroughs will co-operate positively in making these schemes work, as some have already done.

Community Charge

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each local authority area in England *(a)* the number of individuals who are liable to pay the personal community charge, *(b)* the number of people who are paying the personal community charge and *(c)* the number of people who are exempt from paying the personal community charge, separately distinguishing the numbers of exemption category.

Mr. Key: I am arranging for the available information, supplied by local authorities, to be placed in the Library of the House.

The figures given for the total number of exemptions from the personal community charge include

(i) Community charges registration officers' estimates of the numbers exempt because they are in detention, living in short stay accommodation, or persons without fixed abodes. Figures for those categories are known to be underestimated because CCROs are not obliged to keep records of those exempt.

(ii) CCRO's estimates of the numbers excempt because they are contributors to a collective community charge.

Separate information has not been given where there are fewer than 20 persons in a category of exemption or where the majority of authorities reported fewer than 20 persons in a category of exemption.

London Docklands

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amounts have been budgeted by the London Docklands development corporation for meeting the terms of the memorandum of agreement with the London borough of Newham in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Key: I will write to the Hon. Member.

Mobility Standard

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many units of housing association new build are *(a)* mobility standard and *(b)* wheelchair standard for the each year for the last five years; and of those how many units are for sheltered housing for elderly people for both (1) mobility and (2) wheelchair standard;

(2) if he will list, for each year for the last five years, how many units of wheelchair housing of housing association new build have *(a)* one, *(b)* two and *(c)* three bedrooms, excluding those within sheltered housing schemes for elderly people.

Mr. Yeo: The available information on completions of newly built specialised dwellings for 1985 to 1989 is published in table 6.7 "Housing and Construction Statistics 1979-1989: Great Britain" and, for the first half of 1990, in table 1.5 of the June quarter 1990 (Part I) edition of the same title. Wheelchair and mobility standard dwellings for the elderly are not separately identified, nor does the Department collect information about the number of specialised dwellings by number of bedrooms.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many housing association schemes have been audited since the new requirement to build to mobility standard was introduced; and of these how many met the requirement to be of mobility standard;

(2) how many housing association schemes, which were package deal schemes, have been audited since the new requirement to build to mobility standard was introduced; and of these how many met the requirement to be of mobility standard.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to my hon. Friend direct.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's policy on promoting the use of recycled materials and renewable energies where relevant to his Department's activities.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's policies for the use of recycled materials and renewable energies are set out in the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" (Cm. 1200).

In order to ensure that these policies are put into practice in Government, my Department's property holdings organisation is preparing an environmental action guide, which will include advice on the use of recycled material and on energy efficiency.

My Department's policy is to use recycled materials where practicable and reasonably economic to do so.

For instance, my Department uses recycled paper for all of its ministerial correspondence. Other products made from recycled material that are in general use within my Department include manilla paper and file covers, brown paper bags, paper towels, buff envelopes and toilet tissue. We are also conducting trials in the use of recycled paper for high speed photocopying and we are considering a trial of recycled paper for use with computer printers.

Housing Associations

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of housing association new build came from package deal programmes in each year for the last five years.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for the Housing Corporation. I have therefore asked the corporation to respond to my hon. Friend direct.

New Parliamentary Building

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the contractor for the new parliamentary building phase I will achieve completion by 22 December 1990; and when he expects hon. Members will be able to occupy the new offices.

Mr. Yeo: Although the contractor has made considerable progress over the past months, he has not been able to complete the contract and hand over the building to Property Holdings. It seems likely that handover will now be achieved in late February or early March. A programme is being developed to fit out the building and to arrange for a phased programme of moves for Members, their staff and the Departments of the House. It is still expected that full occupation will be achieved at the end of the summer adjournment 1991.

Freeholds

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses are exempt from the provisions of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1967 which permit leaseholders to purchase the freehold of the property.

Sir George Young: The Leasehold Reform Act 1967 gives leaseholders of most houses, but not leaseholders of flats, the right to purchase their freeholds. The number of dwellings exempt is not known. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1987 enables a court to order the compulsory acquisition by the leaseholders of flats of the landlord's interest in certain circumstances where he has been failing in his duties. Again, the number of exempt dwellings is not known. It is open to any leaseholder or group of leaseholders to seek to purchase the freehold of their dwelling by negotiation.

EC Environment Council

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he will be putting forward at the next European ministerial Environment Council on 20 and 21 December on *(a)* the management of hazardous waste, *(b)* the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances and *(c)* developing fiscal instruments to attain environmental protection and improvement objectives.

Mr. Trippier: The first two subjects are on the agenda for discussion at the Council on the basis of proposals submitted by the European Commission. I shall be pressing for agreement to these directives. The question of economic and fiscal mechanisms to achieve environmental objectives may also be discussed. I shall report to Parliament on the outcome of the Council in the usual way.

Local Authority Accounts

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Audit Commission regarding local authorities which are more than 12 months in breach of their statutory duty to produce accounts for audit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Audit Commission publishes each year a list of authorities which are in breach of their statutory duty to produce accounts for audit. It lists those which have not produced accounts by 31 December i.e. within nine months. That number fell from 80 for 1986-87 to 32 for 1987-88 and 29 for 1988-89. Our officials and the Commission's officers have discussed this position amongst other matters during their regular contacts.

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities in England and Wales have not published their statements of account for the financial years *(a)* 1987-88, *(b)* 1986-87, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* any earlier year.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the Department does not have this information.

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment against how many local authorities in breach by more than 12 months of their statutory duty to publish their accounts or produce them for audit proceedings have been instituted.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is treated as a reasonable excuse for a local authority to have failed to publish its statement of account more than 12 months after being required by statute so to do.

Mr. Portillo: It would be for the court to decide in the circumstances of a particular case whether there was a reasonable excuse for a local authority to have failed to publish its statement of account by the statutory time limit.

Bathing Waters

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in the studies and research into the effects of bathing or water sports in sea water contaminated by sewage; whether resources have been made available for the early completion of such studies and research on a comprehensive and scientifically validated basis indicated by the methodology proposed by the Langland bay study; and when the results will be made available.

Mr. Trippier: The Government supported further research last summer. A beach survey was undertaken at Ramsgate Sands with 2,000 beachgoers and a cohort study was conducted at Moreton (Wirral) using 310 volunteers. These further studies provided the opportunity to confirm the validity of the methodologies developed in the Langland Bay study. I expect to receive a report on these surveys next March and copies will be made available to the House.

The Government are anxious to establish as soon as possible the health risks, if any, of bathing in sewage contaminated sea water and is commissioning further research, jointly funded with the National Rivers Authority, using the methodologies developed over the last two years.

Community Charge

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the numbers of people registered, or registerable, under the National Assistance Act 1948, are used in the formulation of the standard spending assessments for the poll tax.

Mr. Key: No, not as such, though such individuals will often be included on other grounds within the indicators used in the calculation of the personal social services SSA element.

National Business Rate

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received from the local government information unit concerning non-payment of the national business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: None.

Atmospheric Pollution

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will continue with the consultancy process that was established for the implementation of the EC directive on atmospheric pollution; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend may have in mind the Large Combustion Plants Directive (88/609/EC). If so, I would refer him to the answer given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Environment and Countryside.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will be happy to continue to discuss the detailed implementation of the directive with those affected.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to deliver to the European Commission the United Kingdom's national programme for emission reductions of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen from existing large combustion plants.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom is sending to the European Commission this week its programme for achieving the cuts in emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) required by the large combustion plants directive. The planned reductions in each target year are greater than those required by the directive.

For SO_2, the planned reductions from existing United Kingdom large combustion plants are 21 per cent. by 1993, 45 per cent. by 1998 and 63 per cent. by 2003, and for NOx 21 per cent. by 1993 and 35 per cent. by 1998, in each case relative to 1980. The programme incorporates a plan backed up by legally binding controls.

The total investment of the electricity supply industry alone both on new, clean plant and new equipment for older plant over the next decade will be over £6 billion.

The United Kingdom is submitting the programme in good time for the 31 December deadline set in the directive.

Salford (Boundaries)

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision with regard to the Local Government Boundaries Commission proposals for the city of Salford.

Mr. Key: Shortly.

Business Rates

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the non-payment of business rates for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Key: I have made no such estimates.

Oil Heaters

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has on the degree to which small waste oil burning appliances, used as a source of heat in garages and workshops, are contributors to airborne pollution.

Mr. Heseltine: There is only limited evidence of the scale of the problem, but appliances of this type are known to be sources of a variety of atmospheric pollutants, including lead and other heavy metals, hydrogen, chloride, NOx, and SO_2.

Nautical Archaeology

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to respond to the recommendations of the Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee's report, "Heritage at Sea".

Mr. Trippier: We have responded today, and I am placing copies in the Library of the House.

In response to the report, we have already announced two main changes. These were set out in the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance". The first is the transfer of responsibility for the protection of historic wrecks in English waters from the Department of Transport to the Department of the Environment. This will bring together control of archaeology on land with that under water. Similar transfers will take place in relation to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The second is the preparation of a central record of historic wrecks by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. The commission in Scotland will be asked to take on a similar responsibility. In Wales, the Welsh Office will be reviewing the new work with the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales.

In the fuller response made today, we say that we are ready to develop, in discussion with the organisations concerned, a code of practice for sea-bed operators whose activities could affect wreck sites. We are also willing to exercise Government powers of ownership, where these can be established, in favour of conserving wreck sites and the artefacts recovered from them. We will consider sympathetically applications for special grant for the development of diver training in the skills required for underwater archaeology. We also make a commitment to make the best of existing salvage reporting arrangements to encourage important finds to be properly conserved and displayed.

The Government do not accept that there is a need for a new agency or legislation, but we intend to make the best use of the powers and resources available in the interests of conservation, and to review these matters once the new allocation of responsibilities has had time to take effect.

The Government are grateful to the joint committee for its work and hopes to have the benefit of its expertise and advice again on these matters in future.

Travellers

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he now proposes to relax planning controls over sites for travelling showpeople.

Mr. Yeo: I have considered carefully, in the light of the responses to my Department's consultation paper "Sites for Travelling Showpeople", whether to introduce permitted development rights for the stationing of up to five caravans, inhabited by travelling showpeople and their families, and for the storage and maintenance of their fairground equipment.

I do not underestimate the difficulties which some showpeople have experienced in obtaining sites with planning permission from which to base their activities. However, the consultation exercise has highlighted the difficulty of reconciling any relaxation of planning control with safeguarding local amenity and the environment. Accordingly, I have decided not to introduce permitted development rights to establish sites for travelling showpeople.

My Department will, however, issue fresh guidance to local planning authorities which will emphasise that, both in formulating local and unitary development plan policies and in development control decisions, authorities should take full account of travelling showpeople's requirements for secure, long-term sites. My officials will work closely with the Showmen's Guild of Great Britain in preparing the guidance.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985 giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Since 1 January 1985 the Department of the Environment has commissioned numerous surveys, including many small surveys, to local authorities, businesses and the general public. Some of these contained questions about opinions but a list of such surveys is not readily available.

Anglian Coastal Study

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he received the Anglian coastal study; and if he will now place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The initial phases of this study are complete and resulting data has been made available to interested parties. The remaining phase which should be completed next summer concentrates on field measurement which will provide valuable data for the detailed design of coastal defence. This information which will be the main output of the third phase will be stored in detabases managed by the Anglian region of the National Rivers Authority. The information will be made available to coastal defence authorities in the region and to this Department.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools Budgets

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the extra amount of money available to each school in Cumbria if 85 per cent. of the potential schools budget for the current year had been distributed under the conditions of his announcement of 11 December, *Official Report*, column *324*.

Mr. Fallon: In the current year, Cumbria is delegating 82·53 per cent. of its potential schools budget. If that was increased to 85 per cent., on average that would release £7,440 to each school.

Notes:

1. Cumbria's potential schools budget in 1990-91 is £112·69 million.
2. Cumbria has 374 schools, of which 330 primary and 44 secondary.
3. The amount per school in the answer is rounded to the nearest £10.

Dental Schools

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for each category A dental school *(a)* the number of unfilled technical jobs in biochemistry departments and *(b)* when he expects them to be filled.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information is not collected centrally about such local management matters.

Cerebral Palsy

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice he gives to local education authorities concerning the funding of places in charitable and private institutions assisting cerebral palsy sufferers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Advice to local education authorities concerning the placement of children with statements in independent schools and non-maintained special schools is contained in circular 22/89, "Assessments and Statements of Special Educational Needs: Procedures within the Education, Health and Social Services".

Hornsey Centre for Children Learning

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received concerning the funding of the Hornsey centre for children learning; and if he will make a statement on its future.

Mr. Fallon: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations expressing concern about the future of the Hornsey centre for children learning. As we have made clear in replying to such letters, while we are sympathetic to these difficulties and acknowledge the work of the Hornsey centre, there is no prospect of the Department's being able to provide financial assistance.

London Education Authorities

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the total spending for the Inner London education authority for each year since 1980 and what proportion of its income was from central government sources; and if he will also list the spending figures for 1990-91 for each of the successor education authorities and the proportion of their income that is drawn from central Government sources.

Mr. Fallon: The net expenditure of the Inner London authority as recorded on the revenue outturn returns made to the Department of the Environment is shown in the table for all years from 1980-81 to 1988-89. Figures for the

outturn expenditure in 1989-90 are not yet available. Grants received by the ILEA are shown for the same years. No rate support grant was received by the authority during this period because of its very high rateable resources. Consistent education budget figures for all the inner London boroughs for 1990-91 are not yet available.

Net spending of the Inner London education authority 1980-81 to 1989-90

Year	Net expenditure £ million[1]	Specific grant income £ million[2]	Specific grants as percentage of net expenditure
1980-81	674·5	12·7	1·9
1981-82	743·8	14·5	1·9
1982-83	803·3	15·4	1·9
1983-84	870·9	15·1	1·7
1985-86	956·1	20·3	2·1
1984-85	924·4	17·2	1·9
1986-87	1,033·0	24·9	2·4
1987-88	1,097·2	31·1	2·9
1988-89	1,074·8	41·3	3·8

[1] Net expenditure as reported on the Form RO1.

[2] The figures for grant exclude specific grant aid in support of mandatory awards, which has also been excluded from the expenditure column.

Special Purpose Grant

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department, in calculating the special purpose grant (Development) for grant-maintained schools, takes into account the local education authority contribution to education support grant and local education authority training grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The LEA contribution to expenditure supported by education support grants and local education authority training grants is treated as part of central LEA costs of which grant-maintained schools receive a per capita amount as part of their annual maintenance grant. Special purpose grant (development) is calculated by reference to the education support grants and local education authority training grants paid to LEAs.

Geography

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now expects to lay draft statutory orders for geography in the national curriculum.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering the recommendations on geography in the national curriculum made to him recently by the National Curriculum Council. He hopes to issue a draft order for consultation in time to introduce national curriculum geography in key stages 1, 2 and 3 in autumn 1991.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his answer of 17 December to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, if he will place the surveys listed in the Library.

Mr. Eggar: A copy of each of these reports on these projects, when completed, is placed in the Department's library and is available to researchers there. It has not been our practice to place copies elsewhere.

Bullers Wood School

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about his decision to approve the catchment area for Bullers Wood grant-maintained school in the London borough of Bromley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend approved Bullers Wood school as grant maintained on 10 October 1990. To date, no representations regarding this decision have been received by the Department directly relating to the admissions arrangements.

Proposals by a school for grant-maintained status must contain the proposed admissions arrangements. My right hon. and learned Friend will continue to consider these on their merits taking all relevant factors, including any comments or objections, into account.

Pre-school Education

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has received the report of the committee of inquiry into the educational experience which should be offered to three and four-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is today publishing the report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. It treats the range of factors affecting the quality of provision carefully and helpfully. My right hon. and learned Friend and I are very grateful to our hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Angela Rumbold) and the members of her committee for this valuable contribution to the development of thinking about education before the age of five.

The report comes at a time of significantly increased financial provision for the education of the under-fives. In real terms, LEA expenditure on the under-fives is almost half as high again as it was a decade ago; and the proportion of under-fives in education has increased by over 17 per cent. at a time when the birth rate has been rising.

Against this background of growing participation, the Government believe that the existing diversity of provision for the under-fives, involving the private, voluntary and local authority sectors, is healthy and should be encouraged. Good-quality provision can make a valuable contribution to young children's development. The Government consider that parents are the best judges of their children's needs: some will prefer to make provision in the home for constructive play and early learning activities; some will look to playgroups; and others will seek nursery or infant classes or day nurseries. We are sending copies of the report to all local education and social services authorities; it will be for them to consider how the report should be acted on in their areas, but we hope that it will be carefully studied by local authorities and by all those working in the field.

This Department is working closely with the Department of Health to ensure that within the diversity of provision, there is a clear framework for local action on services for pre-school children; my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced the introduction of an education support grant for 1991-92 and the succeeding year to help authorities improve the planning and co-ordination of services for the under-fives, and my right

hon. and learned Friend has recently announced a significant enhancement of my Department's grants to the Pre-school Playgroups Association and to the British Association for Early Childhood Education.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education and Library Boards (Advisers)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of advisers employed by each education and library board over the last five years and the cost of employing these advisers over the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Actual expenditure is not available in the form requested, but the following table has been prepared based on expenditure shown in boards' revised financial schemes.

Financial Year

£ thousands

Education and Library Board	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Belfast					
Number of advisers	7	6	6	5	8
Cost	158	154	161	144	233
North-Eastern					
Number of advisers	14	14	10	9	14
Cost	309	352	270	261	384
South-Eastern					
Number of advisers	8	8	7	7	12
Cost	202	205	205	202	381
Southern					
Number of advisers	1	2	2	3	12
Cost	23	48	53	70	371
Western					
Number of advisers	5	5	5	5	12
Cost	98	113	131	137	288

Secondary School Pupils

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of children of secondary school age in each Eastern education and library board area over the last 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers are as follows:

Year	*Belfast*	*Western*	*North-Eastern*	*South-Eastern*	*Southern*
1981	36,869	27,503	36,353	27,586	31,171
1982	35,956	27,555	36,655	27,907	31,503
1983	33,049	27,550	36,736	27,902	31,655
1984	33,619	27,735	36,730	27,560	32,147
1985	32,490	27,573	36,603	27,331	32,188
1986	31,462	27,369	35,765	26,607	31,714
1987	30,345	27,158	34,589	25,913	31,081
1988	29,090	26,706	33,548	25,163	30,493
1989	28,929	26,766	32,659	24,591	30,154
1990	28,452	26,442	31,847	24,316	29,876

Fallen Animals

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in the Strangford constituency.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in north Belfast.

Mr. Molyneaux: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in Lagan Valley.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in east Antrim.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in South Antrim.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in Belfast, South.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the health and environmental implications of the decision by animal by-product plants not to accept fallen animals for disposal; and what proposals he has to provide alternative means of disposal of such animals in east Londonderry.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) on 18 December at column *142*.

Building Work

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish tables showing *(a)* the number of new buildings, *(b)* the amount spent on new buildings, *(c)* the amount spent on repairs and maintenance and *(d)* the amount spent on building renovation by his Department in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 5 December 1990]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Departmental Appointees

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual cost of fees and reimbursements to people appointed to *(a)* public, *(b)* non-governmental and *(c)* other bodies by his Department.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 5 December 1990]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Advertising

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish a table showing the amount spent in each of the last five years by his Department on *(a)* advertising in the press, *(b)* advertising on television and radio, *(c)* other advertising and promotion and *(d)* promotion videos and sound cassettes.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 11 December 1990]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his Department since 1 January 1985, giving the date and purpose of each survey.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Arms Control

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the work of the new joint arms control implementation group.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces explained the role of the joint arms control implementation group in his written answer on 6 March at column *622*. The group is responsible to the Secretary of State for Defence for practical implementation of our obligations and exercise of our rights in the verification of arms control agreements.

Washington Embassy

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to revise the size of the staff at the United Kingdom embassy in Washington DC.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: None at present; staffing levels in Washington, like those for all British missions abroad, are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate to requirements.

Geneva Convention

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose to the United Nations Security Council a draft resolution reminding all states party to the Geneva convention of their legal duty to prosecute in the case of prima facie evidence of grave breaches of the Geneva convention by persons of any nationality.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: States party to the Geneva conventions are well aware of their legal duties since they have an obligation to ensure that grave breaches of the conventions are an offence under their national legislation.

Argentina

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters, in regard to nuclear weapons testing and prospects for Argentina signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, were discussed with his Argentine counterparts or officials from the Argentine Foreign Ministry during the visit of Foreign Minister Cavallo to London on 11 December.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Cavallo took the opportunity of his visit to explain details of the joint declaration of 28 November on the common nuclear policy of Argentina and Brazil.

Israel

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he intends taking as a state signatory to the fourth Geneva convention if the Israeli Government proceed with their declared intention to deport members of the Palestinian civilian population of the west bank and Gaza who are protected persons under the provisions of the fourth Geneva convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made it clear that any such deportations would violate international law. We urge the Israeli Government not to proceed with them.

Belligerent Occupation

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council naming states recognised by the international consensus as being engaged in belligerent occupation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No, because it would be difficult to reach international consensus on such a list of states.

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose to the United Nations Security Council a draft resolution reminding all states engaged in belligerent occupation of the implications of grave breaches of the Geneva convention, with particular regard to those states' treatment of the civilian population who are under occupation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The obligations of states party to the Fourth Geneva convention were reiterated by the Security Council in its resolution 674 with reference to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he will ask the Iranian ambassador to call on him to discuss the renewal of the death threat on Mr. Salman Rushdie by the Iranian Minister for Islamic Religious Affairs and the implications for international laws protecting individuals;

(2) what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking following the renewal of the death threat on Mr. Salman Rushdie by the Iranian Minister for Islamic Religious Affairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our chargé d'affaires in Tehran has expressed to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs our concern about certain recent statements made in Iran about Mr. Rushdie. We continue to understand that the Iranian Government respect international law and would not interfere in the internal affairs of any other country, any more than the United Kingdom would.

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any matters in regard to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Gulf region were discussed during the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers at the inter-governmental conference in Rome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library the surveys listed in his answer of 17 December to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No. The surveys were commissioned on a private basis and were not intended to be made public.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received any information, in the context of the United Kingdom's role as a depository power for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, concerning progress made in discussions between the respective Prime Ministers of North and South Korea on 11 December in particular in regard to the implementation of nuclear safeguards regimes in their respective countries, pursuant to each country's membership of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No.

West Bank and Gaza

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ask the Israeli Government to act in conformity with their obligation under the fourth Geneva convention concerning the protection of the civilian population of the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have reminded the Israeli Government many times of its obligation to administer the occupied territories in accordance with the provisions of the fourth Geneva convention.

Iraq

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he possesses concerning the roles of the Iraqi state organisation for technical industries and the Iraqi military industrial commission in procuring nuclear or other sensitive technology and material usable in a nuclear weapons programme.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the present circumstances, it would not be appropriate to divulge information of this kind.

Immigration

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government will introduce their centrally organised scheme for DNA testing in immigration cases; and whether any changes are proposed to entry clearance fees.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have for some time now accepted that DNA profiling appears to be the most accurate method available for determining parentage in immigration cases. Several thousand cases have been satisfactorily determined on that basis through tests commissioned and paid for by the applicants themselves. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for the Home Department announced on 14 June 1989 our intention to introduce a Government scheme for DNA testing as a means of resolving first time settlement applications where the relationship could not otherwise be established.

The necessary arrangements have now been completed and contracts awarded to two British companies, Cellmark Diagnostics Ltd. and University Diagnostics Ltd., to carry out DNS tests. In suitable cases, entry clearance officers at British diplomatic posts overseas will now be able to offer to arrange tests which will be carried out by these independent scientific experts on a commercial basis. As my right hon. Friend indicated in June 1989, DNA testing will not be offered as a matter of routine and will not be compulsory.

ECOs will offer to arrange tests with the consent of the applicant and sponsor in cases where the relevant relationships cannot be demonstrated easily by other means. If an applicant or his sponsor declines to undergo a test, that would not of itself be a ground for refusing the application. But if an ECO is not satisfied about the relationship on the basis of the evidence before him, the applicant will now have the option of taking a DNA test to resolve the matter. We believe that this will go a long way towards making disputes about family relationships a thing of the past.

In considering how to finance the scheme, we have sought to avoid imposing a significant burden either upon individual applicants who are invited to take a DNA test, or upon the taxpayer. The cost of such tests will therefore be covered by an increase in the fee charged for lodging all settlement applications. This increase will also cover the rise in administrative costs.

Revised fees are to be introduced with effect from 14 January 1991. These were approved by the Privy Council on 19 December. The principal fees will be as follows:

	£	
Single entry clearance	20	no change
Single entry clearance for those applicants under 25 years of age	10	new category
Double entry clearance	30	no change
Multiple entry clearance		
—for two years validity	40	reduction of £4
—for five years validity	85	new category
Application for settlement or marriage	80	increase of £20
Other long term entry clearances	60	no change

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 December.

Mr. Hurd: A meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council took place in Brussels on 18 and 19 December. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, represented the United Kingdom.

The Council discussed Mediterranean policy and reached informal agreement on the aid and trade aspects of the Community's relations with the Mediterranean for 1991-96. Informal agreement was also reached on the Asia and Latin America programme for 1991-95, and the resources to be allocated to it.

The Council adopted negotiating mandates for association agreements with Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Negotiations will begin on 20 December. A mandate was also agreed for the negotiations of a customs union with San Marino. The Council reviewed progress on the negotiations between the Community and the European Free Trade Association on the creation of a European economic area and endorsed steps to move the negotiations forward at the EC/EFTA ministerial meeting on 19 December.

The Council reached agreement on the negotiating mandate for a new financial protocol to the EC/Yugoslavia co-operation agreement. A meeting of the EC/Yugoslavia Co-operation Council took place in the margins, as did a meeting of the EC/Egypt Co-operation Council.

On the Gulf, Ministers reaffirmed their position that any meeting between the Iraqi Foreign Minister and the EC presidency must follow and not precede a meeting between President Bush and the Iraqis.

Mercenaries

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend to sign the international convention against the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do not intend to sign the convention, which would be difficult to implement in United Kingdom law. We will continue to keep the question of mercenaries under review.

TRANSPORT

Bus Services

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has considered research conducted by the National Consumer Council into the use, frequency and standards of bus services since deregulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A copy of the National Consumer Council's report, "Have the buses caught up yet?" was sent to my Department in October. The responsibility for providing bus services and information about them is, under the Transport Act 1985, for bus operators and local authorities and I have suggested that the NCC should make their useful review readily available to those bodies.

Speedlink

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the effect of the closure of the Speedlink rail freight service on the number of lorry loads per day on Scotland's road network.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is still in discussion with customers about Speedlink traffic following its announcement last week that the Speedlink network will close in July 1991. In Scotland, BR expects to retain up to half of the domestic freigh carried by Speedlink, and BR currently estimates that the maximum effect will be no more than 150 extra lorryloads a day on Scotland's roads.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research was carried out into the effect which the cessation of the Speedlink service would have on employment in Scotland, and in particular within the Highlands and Islands; and if he will place full details of research in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail currently employs about 250 people in Scotland specifically on Speedlink traffic, and expects to deploy many of them to other work, including alternative trainload services. British Rail is still in discussion with customers about their Speedlink traffic and the effects on employment by BR customers, road hauliers and others cannot be assessed at present.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research was carried out into the effect

which the cessation of the speedlink service would have upon the timber industry in Scotland; and if he will place full details of any such research in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail is still in discussion with timber industry customers about their speedlink traffic, but BR currently understands that alternative transport arrangements will be made by the timber industry for any traffic not retained on rail.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will disclose the findings of any research carried out into the effect which the impending cessation of British Rail speedlink service may have upon the volume of freight traffic on the road network; and if he will place full details of any such research in the Library.

Mr. Freeman: BR currently estimates that the maximum increase in road freight will be 1·5 million tonnes—equivalent to some 0·06 per cent. of total United Kingdom freight.

M42-M40 Junction

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the junction of the M42 motorway and M40 motorway was opened; when its use was restricted by cones; how many cones are being used at this junction at present; what is the estimated cost of these cones; and when he expects these cones to be removed.

Mr. Chope: The M40-M42 junction opened on 19 December 1989. Cones have restricted the M40 to M42 northbound link road to a single lane since opening. From 8 October 1990 cones have been used throughout the interchange as part of various traffic management measures during the layout alterations presently being undertaken there. The cost of cones is included in the price for the work. Subject to favourable weather conditions the carriageway layout alterations are expected to be completed and the cones removed for Christmas.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the purpose of the work being undertaken at the junction of the M40 motorway and M42 motorway; what is the cost of this work; when this work began; when he expects this work to be completed; and why this work was not undertaken during the construction of this junction.

Mr. Chope: A £1·5 million contract commenced on 8 October 1990 to improve traffic flows at the M40-M42 junction. Subject to favourable weather conditions, the carriageway layout alterations are expected to be complete for Christmas. Traffic flows through the junction have increased significantly since the start of work on the M40 Warwick section. So as to avoid the risk of delay to that contract a separate contract for the improvement of the junction was let.

Aston Expressway

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated daily cost to the public as a result of the closure of the slip road between the Aston expressway and spaghetti junction in Birmingham.

Mr. Chope: The closure of the slip roads between Aston expressway and the Tyburn road has diverted traffic onto the local road network. The Department does not have a traffic model of this network and can not therefore calculate the additional cost of traffic delays and increased journey times.

It is understood that Birmingham city council engineer's department have made an approximate estimate of the delay cost at £20,000 per working day.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he expects the slip road between the Aston expressway and spaghetti junction in Birmingham to be reopened before 26 August 1991.

Mr. Chope: The slip roads between Tyburn road and Aston expressway should be re-opened to traffic by July 1991.

Railways Act 1974 (Grant)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the allowable cost per sensitive lorry mile as used for determination of eligibility for grant under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 for each year of operation; and whether he will take steps to widen the definition of sensitive lorry mile, and introduce a sliding scale of allowable cost giving a high level of potential grant towards urban single carriageways tapering to a lower level for uncongested rural motorways.

Mr. Freeman: The prevailing cost ceiling per sensitive lorry mile for grants under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 is as follows:

Year	*SLM ceiling (cash) pence*
1975-81	25
1981-82	30
1982-84	45
1984-85	47
1986-89	28
1990	34

The ceiling was reduced at the end of 1985 to accord with the implied weighting attributable to environmental factors in new road assessment.

The definition of a sensitive lorry mile, and the monetary valuation ascribed to each SLM, are issues being addressed by a current internal Department review of freight facilities grants.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what process of monitoring and checking exists for ensuring that sums paid out in grant under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 are actually expended for the purposes for which they were made; and if he will review the adequacy of such processes.

Mr. Freeman: Instalments of grant are paid against claims certified by independent auditors. A proportion of grant is retained until Departmental officials have visited the site to verify that grant-aided facilities are in place. The traffic actually carried by grant-aided facilities is monitored annually throughout the period (usually 10 years) over which the application for grant was assessed. The adequacy of these grant mechanisms is being considered as part of the current review of freight facilities grants.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since inception, the

total sums paid out in grants made under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974; and if he will place in the Library details of each recipient of such grant, the amount or amounts involved, those which are no longer in use, and those which following the cessation of the British Rail speedlink service will no longer be used.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1975, grants under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 have been awarded as follows:

Year	*£ million (cash)*
1975	0·5
1976	2·3
1977	4·0
1978	9·0
1979	4·7
1980	7·6
1981	4·3
1982	3·4
1983	6·0
1984	7·5
1985	9·0
1986	2·7
1987	2·6
1988	0·7
1989	4·1
1990	0·8

The figures are rounded and comprise grants awarded in England, Scotland and Wales. Grants in Scotland and Wales are administered by the Scottish Development Department and Welsh Office respectively. Information in the form requested concerning recipients of grant and the amounts involved is being compiled. It will be placed in the Library shortly. Information concerning the continued use of grant-aided facilities is commercially sensitive.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the average time taken to process applications for grant under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 between submission of grant application until final approval for each of the last 15 years; and whether he will review the procedures governing such applications.

Mr. Freeman: The Department does not record the information requested and it could not be produced except at disproportionate cost. The procedures for processing grant applications are being considered as part of the current review of freight facilities grants.

M6 (Gravelly Hill Interchange)

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the technical matters which needed to be resolved before work on a replacement structure at the Gravelly hill interchange of the M6 motorway could begin and were still to be resolved on 28 November; and who has been responsible for the resolution of these technical matters.

Mr. Chope: By 28 November the only outstanding matters were the refinement of the repair options and the assessment of the sub-structure and of the damage to the adjacent bridge span. These matters were resolved by 3 December.

My Department was responsible for the resolution of these technical matters.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the work on a replacement structure at the Gravelly hill interchange of the M6 motorway to begin; when he expects this work to be completed; which contractor is going to be employed for this work; what is the value of the contract for this work; and who will pay for this work.

Mr. Chope: Three separate contracts are to be employed for the repair work. These three contracts are presently at various stages of tender and award. One has been awarded to Thermic UK Ltd. for demolition of the damaged structure in the sum of £137,262. The Department is about to let a contract for the fabrication of steelwork and has invited tenders for the main construction work. Some works preparatory to the start of demolition are already in hand.

It is hoped that all works will be complete by the end of July 1991.

The damage resulting from the accident is the subject of an insurance claim.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long the special scaffolding under one row of columns supporting the M6 motorway at the Gravelly Hill interchange has been in place; what is the purpose and cost; and who was responsible for checking the calculations as to its stability.

Mr. Chope: Two contracts are currently in progress at Gravelly Hill interchange and both involve scaffolding around the viaduct supports. One contract started in December 1989 and the other in August 1990. The scaffolding provides a working platform for the contractors and does not support the viaducts. In one contract there is a substantial temporary steel truss which allows areas of concrete to be broken out while traffic is still using the viaduct.

The design and the check of the working platform scaffold is the responsibility of the contractor. Any temporary support to the motorway viaduct structure is designed and checked by the Department's consulting engineers. The costs of the scaffold and temporary supports are not immediately available and I will write to the hon. Member further on this.

Hazardous Cargoes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent assessments he has made and plans to make in evaluating the comparative safety of transporting ammunition by road or by rail.

Mr. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research and research projects have been carried out or commissioned by his Department for each of the last five years, relating to the transportation of hazardous and inflammable goods by road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on dangerous substances sub-committee is studying the major hazards aspects of the transport of such substances. The report of that work, which includes a quantified risk assessment of the transport of specific substances including explosives by road and by rail, is due next year.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why a train carrying spent nuclear fuel flasks was taken

into sidings at Bletchley on the morning of 23 November; what risks were posed by the halting of the train to the people of Bletchley and Milton Keynes; what emergency procedures were set in action; and how many such nuclear trains have been halted non-routinely in sidings over the past year.

Mr. Freeman: I understand from British Rail that a Temple Mills-Crewe nuclear flask train was stopped when one of its vehicles activated a hot axle-box detector at the approach to Bletchley. It was taken forward into a loop line where it was examined, but no fault found. The fire brigade was in attendance and the police were on stand-by while the examination was taking place. There was no risk to local residents. There is no requirement for such incidents, in which neither an accident has occurred nor any fault has been found, to be reported to Her Majesty's railways inspectorate.

Dial-A-Ride

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the London Dial-A-Ride regionalisation proposals to be tested in a trial region; and which region this will be.

Mr. Freeman: London Transport is responsible for administering the London Dial-A-Ride scheme, which is funded by Government grant. They have been considering plans to regionalise the service for over two years, with a view to obtaining a more efficient service for users and better value for money.

In order to develop detailed workable proposals in one region before agreeing to full regionalisation, LT held discussions with existing management committees of the six services in north-east London. As a result of those discussions, LT are now convinced of the benefits which full regionalisation will bring. I understand they are therefore developing regional boards of user representatives throughout London which will be responsible for introducing regional management structures and regional policies over the next 12-18 months. London Transport have no plans to test the benefits in a trial region before full implementation.

Road Accidents (Freight Transport)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of fatalities, and the number of serious injuries arising from *(a)* road accidents involving heavy goods vehicles and *(b)* freight trains, in each of the last fifteen years.

Mr. Freeman: *(a)* The information requested is given in the table for the years 1979 to 1989. Information for earlier years is only available at disproportionate cost.

(a) *Casualties in road accidents involving heavy goods vehicles: Great Britain: 1979 to 1989*

Year	*Killed*	*Seriously injured*	*All KSI*[1]
1979	1,063	5,878	6,941
1980	859	5,119	5,978
1981	851	4,919	5,770
1982	875	4,816	5,691
1983	811	4,244	5,055
1984	876	4,476	5,352
1985	811	4,331	5,142
1986	908	4,391	5,299
1987	910	4,380	5,290
1988	900	4,655	5,555
1989	989	4,780	5,769

[1] Killed or seriously injured.

(b) The information requested in relation to freight trains is not readily available.

A10 (Hoddesdon-Cambridge)

Mr. Ian Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to appoint consultants to carry out the A10 Hoddesdon to Cambridge study.

Mr. Chope: Early in the new year.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the surveys referred to in his answer of 17 December to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. McLoughlin: The list comprises about 370 surveys and I am therefore sending it separately to the hon. Member.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the sum which British Rail is planning to invest in order to exploit the opportunities offered by the channel tunnel and provide a breakdown of the projects involved and the amount of money to be spent on each programme.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail currently plans to invest around £1·5 billion (in 1990-91 prices) to provide inter-national rail services in the early years after the tunnel opens. Major projects already approved by the Government include some £400 million for inter-capital passenger trains, over £100 million for the terminal at Waterloo, £75 million for a maintenance depot in west London, £80 million for the first batch of international freight locomotives and Tonbridge-Redhill electrification. BR's plans also include a station at Ashford, night and north of London passenger services and further investment in freight facilities. In addition we expect in the spring to receive British Rail's proposals for a new line between London and the tunnel.

M40 Motorway

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the M40 motorway to be completed and available for public use.

Mr. Chope: The M40 motorway is expected to be completed and open to traffic by mid-January 1991.

Road Closures (Bad Weather)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions in each of the last 10 years were the A62, M62, A66 and A69 respectively, closed due to inclement weather.

Mr. Chope: The information (by financial year) is as follows:

	M62	A62	A66	A69
1981-82	1	2	n/a	0
1982-83	0	0	n/a	0
1983-84	0	2	n/a	0
1984-85	0	0	n/a	0
1985-86	0	2	8	0
1986-87	1	1	1	0
1987-88	0	0	2	0
1988-89	0	0	1	0
1989-90	0	0	3	0
1990-91	0	1	1	0

These figures do not include very short-term closures to permit clearance of the carriageway following accidents or vehicle breakdown associated with inclement weather.

M40

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the contract dates for completion of each remaining section of the M40 motorway; and if he will list the main contractor for each section.

Mr. Chope: The contract dates for completion of each remaining section of the M40 motorway and the main contractors are as follows:

Contract	Contractor	Contract dates for completion
Gaydon Contract	R. M. Douglas Construction Ltd.	1 January 1991
Banbury Bypass—Contract IV	Balfour Beatty	9 December 1990
Banbury Bypass—Contract III	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	18 November 1990
Banbury Bypass—Contract II	John Mowlem and Company	12 June 1990
Banbury Bypass—Contract I	Tarmac Construction Ltd.	26 February 1991
Waterstock to Wendlebury	McAlpine/Fairclough Joint Venture	26 May 1991

The complete road is due to be opened in mid-January 1991.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if bonus or enhancement payments have been paid to contractors meeting earlier deadlines for construction of sections of the M40 motorway.

Mr. Chope: Yes.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected cost of construction for each of the remaining sections of the M40 motorway.

Mr. Chope: The tender prices submitted by the successful contractors for each of the remaining section of the M40 motorway are as follows:

	£
Gaydon	33,989,302
Banbury contract 4	51,712,702
Banbury contract 3	52,199,044
Banbury contract 2	17,910,558
Banbury contract 1	24,197,510
Waterstock-Wendlebury	64,100,727

Final costs are not available.

Transport Council

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the meeting of the European Community Transport Council on 17 and 18 December.

Mr. Rifkind: I attended the meeting of the European Council of Transport Ministers which was held in Brussels on 17-18 December.

I am pleased with the progress made at the Council.

On inland transport, the Council agreed a road haulage package which included a 40 per cent. increase in Community road haulage quotas for each of the years 1991 and 1992; an additional one-off increase in the EC quota to take account of German unification; and measures to be taken in the event of a "crisis" in the road haulage market. Agreement was also reached on a regulation to increase the maximum permitted length of road trains from 18·0 m to 18·35 m; and on a directive on combined transport which will give a useful stimulus to this mode of transport.

Other inland transport matters were also discussed, but without conclusions being reached. The Council briefly noted the Commisssion's recent proposals on vehicle tax harmonisation. On third country transit, the Commission reported that while the negotiations on third country transit with Yugoslavia were within sight of a successful conclusion, those with Austria and Switzerland had made much less progress. It was nevertheless agreed to continue bilateral negotiations with the Alpine countries for a further six months. The Commission also reported that its working group had reached agreement on guidelines for a high speed rail network. Ministers resolved that further work should be undertaken, including the commercial evaluation of possible network links. There was a brief discussion of road safety issues.

On air transport, measures were agreed on air cargo services and denied boarding compensation; there was some discussion of predatory practices; and the Commission reported on negotiations with Norway and Sweden. The air cargo measure covers scheduled and non-scheduled services conducted as purely cargo operations. It provides liberalised access to the air cargo market and is the basis for further measures to create a truly single market in this sector by 1992. The other agreed measure provides for the payment of minimum levels of compensation to passengers who are denied boarding on a flight onto which they were booked. On predatory practices I reiterated the United Kingdom's strongly held view that adequate measures must be put in place to prevent unfair practices by air carriers. The Commission's proposal will be brought back to the Council after further work has been done on it.

On shipping, the Commission was given a firm remit to prepare proposals for a two stage approach to cabotage liberalisation, in which the main phase would be completed by the end of 1993. The second phase, service between the mainland and islands and between islands,

would follow after an interval yet to be agreed. This was a major step forward and I hope that we make good progress on the detail under the next Presidency.

The Council also agreed in principle to a regulation facilitating the transfer of vessels from one member state's register to another to free shipowners from the costs and administrative procedures involved in a change of register within the Community. This is a useful measure which is very much in the spirit of the single market. Other shipping items included a progress report from the Commission on their package of proposals for the second stage of Community shipping policy; a discussion of the draft rules of procedure for the UNCTAD liner code review conference; and a discussion of negotiations with west and central African countries.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Civil Aviation Authority has responded to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the authority's provision of navigation and air traffic control to civil aircraft published in July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Civil Aviation Authority publishes its initial response today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The Commission was particularly asked to comment on whether and to what extent the authority had implemented the recommendations of their 1983 report; the appropriateness of the authority's investment management arrangements; the adequacy of the authority's mechanisms for improving the efficiency of services. The services provided to military aircraft and the authority's regulatory activities were excluded from the inquiry.

The Commission found that significant progress had been made in reforming working practices, improving corporate planning, setting clear corporate and individual objectives, introducing performance-related pay, managing the investment programme, and making the organisation more accountable to users. The Commission praised the CAA's safety record against the background of a marked growth in air traffic, and its contribution, through Eurocontrol, towards the harmonisation of air traffic services in Europe. The Commission concluded that the CAA was not pursuing a course of conduct against the public interest. There remained scope for improvement in some areas, in particular manpower planning had not yet attained a standard satisfactory to the Commission or thed CAA's management.

The authority in its response says that it has accepted all but one of the MMC's 40 recommendations, and that work has already begun on implementing many of them.

I endorse the Commission's recognition of the very great progress made by the CAA under its present Chairman; of the CAA's safety record; and of its valuable work in Europe. The Authority's response clearly demonstrates their determination to achieve further improvements in their management practices, and I am pleased to see that many of the Commission's recommendations are already being implemented.

The MMC recommended that I should review in 1996 whether the CAA and national air traffic services (NATS) should be separated. I agree that there should be no change at present, but that it will be appropriate to reconsider the issue later in the current investment cycle.

I am asking the chairman of the authority to keep me informed of his progress in implementing the MMC's detailed recommendations.

Tachographs

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what decisions he has reached on the serialisation of tachograph charts.

Mr. Chope: I have concluded that despite the superficial attractions of serialisation, it would not, on balance, be worthwhile. The offences which it was suggested serialisation might help detect are already detected by other means. Serialisation would add unnecessarily to the costs both of industry and the Department's enforcement staff.

Speed Limits

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will issue advice on lower speed limits in residential areas.

Mr. Chope: Guidance to local authorities on circumstances where 20 mph speed limits might be suitable has been issued.

I have placed copies in the Library.

Rail Electrification

Mr. Peter Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide credit approval to enable the electrification of the railway lines between Chester, Ellesmere Port and Hooton.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend is happy to announce that, subject to agreement with the parties on an appropriate expenditure profile, he can make credit approvals available to enable this project to begin in 1991-92.

Channel Tunnel Rail Freight

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about investment in channel tunnel rail freight services.

Mr. Freeman: BR is taking forward its plans and has announced that the first of its key channel tunnel regional freight terminals, which will be built with private sector partners, is to be at Wakefield to serve Yorkshire and Humberside. I have today approved British Rail's proposal to invest over £20 million in a further ten class 92 dual-voltage electric locomotives for channel tunnel freight, in addition to the 20 locomotives that we approved last May.

CIVIL SERVICE

EC Nationals

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he plans to make changes to the legislation which governs the employment in the civil service of nationals of other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Renton: The Government are considering the implications of article 48 of the treaty of Rome for

employment in the civil service of nationals of other member states and for our domestic legislation. An announcement will be made as soon as the Government have reached a conclusion on this matter.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of his office over the most recent convenient period.

Mr. Renton: The Office of the Minister for the Civil Service, which forms a part of the Cabinet Office, regularly seeks customers' views of the effectiveness of services provided. In addition the following opinion surveys have been conducted since 1 April 1990:

Evaluation of the Senior Management Development Programme
Consultants: Peat, Marwick, McLintock
Due to report: January 1991.
Pilot Study on Undergraduate Attitudes to Civil Service Careers
Consultants: Cragg, Ross and Dawson Ltd.
Conducted: Summer 1990.
Study of Serving Staff's Attitudes to Civil Service Careers
Surveyors: Institute of Manpower Studies
Conducted: Summer 1990.

The remainder of the Cabinet Office has not conducted or commissioned any opinion surveys during that time.

THE ARTS

Quaker Tapestry

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister for the Arts if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Quaker tapestry to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Renton: I considered an application for this exhibition to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall and gave my permission on 30 November 1990.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the cost to the Exchequer of the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Government expenditure in the United Kingdom under the common agricultural policy for 1990-91 is estimated at about £1,900 million. This covers market support and structural aid schemes. In addition, the United Kingdom Exchequer supports CAP spending elsewhere in the Community through our net contribution to the EC budget, which in 1990-91 is estimated at about £2,100 million. However, this sum is not allocated to particular elements of the budget, such as agriculture.

Agricultural Chemicals

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to accelerate the rate of processing applications for the registration of agricultural chemicals.

Mr. Maclean: The most important step is to increase the number of scientific staff in MAFF regulating pesticides by 60 per cent. in 1990-91.

Christmas Trees (Acid Rain)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has made any recent study of the effects of acid rain on the stock of Christmas trees grown for use in the current year.

Mr. Maclean: The Forestry Commission's research into the effects of air pollution includes experimental work on the species which are most commonly used as Christmas trees. There is no evidence that acid rain has had any significant effect on Christmas trees.

Farm Reservoirs

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grants are available to farmers for the construction of farm reservoirs.

Mr. Curry: In line with the Government's policy of concentrating its aid on environmental investments rather than on those intended to increase production, grants for the construction of reservoirs are no longer available.

Scrapie

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) further to the letter in the *Veterinary Record* of 15 December from the head of his veterinary investigation section, how many scrapie-affected *(a)* sheep and *(b)* goats he expects to receive for his research purposes;

(2) how many sheep carcases he has received between 17 November and 15 December; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he intends to extend his study into the time-temperature combinations required to incubate the scrapie agent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We are seeking 4,000 brains of scrapie affected sheep and goats as part of a research study to determine time-temperature combinations required to inactivate the scrapie agent. Between 17 November and 15 December 55 sheep carcases were submitted to veterinary investigation centres in England and Wales for scrapie diagnosis.

Irradiated Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the irradiation plants in EC countries which have received official authorisation to import irradiated food in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No such authorisation have been granted.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the irradiation plants in the non-EC countries for which he has given approval for the import of irradiated food into the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No such plants have received approval.

Fishery Protection

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the final period of his charter of MV Southella for fishery protection duties; what was the cost of the charter; and if he proposes to undertake a similar charter in 1991-92.

Mr. Maclean: The MV Southella charter to carry out fishery protection duties commenced on 18 July 1990, and was concluded on 23 October 1990. The cost of the charter, including additional inspectorate costs for staff carried on board, totalled £327,452. A decision on whether to charter a vessel next year will depend on the availability of Royal Navy ships, the fisheries protection task to be carried out and the availability of resources.

Bovine Offal

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether he has any information about the export of animal protein derived from bovine offal from the United Kingdom to non-EC countries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is monitoring the trade to non-EC countries of animal protein derived from bovine offal; and if he will make a statement;

(3) whether he intends to introduce legislation to prevent the export of animal protein derived from bovine offal to non-EC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that no exports of animal protein material derived from specified bovine offal are taking place. Nevertheless, I am pursuing the possibility of introducing legislation to prohibit the export of such material to non-EC countries for use in animal feed.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research establishments and projects respectively which have been granted moneys from his Department for research into BSE; and if he will list the amounts involved.

Mr. Maclean: The following BSE research projects are being funded by my Department in 1990-91.

BSE projects being funded by MAFF in 1990-91

	Estimated costs (£ million)
MAFF: Central Veterinary Laboratory	
1. Epidemiology of BSE	0·5
2. Clinicopathology of BSE	0·4
3. Transmissibility studies	0·1
4. Molecular biology	0·2
5. Molecular genetic studies	0·2
6. Dam/offspring studies 7. Embryo transfer studies	0·6
Sub-total	2·0
ADAS (RDS)	
8. Dam/offspring studies	0·4
9. Embryo transfer studies	0·1
Sub-total	0·5
AFRC Institute of Animal Health (Compton and Neuropathogensis Unit)	
10. Identification of BSE infection in cattle tissue	0·04
11. Transmission of BSE and scrapie into sheep and goats	0·02
12. Strain typing of BSE in mice	0·09
13. Susceptibility of BSE and scrapie isolates to lab. facsimiles of rendering practices	0·01
14. Susceptibility of the BSE agent to chemical and physical inactivation procedures	0·04
15. Cloning and characterisation of the bovine Prp gene	0·10
16. Analysis of BSE associated fibril	0·10
17. Diagnosis of BSE by detection of abnormal deposits of Prp (prion protein)	0·10
Sub-total	0·5
Royal Veterinary College	
18. Infectivity of various tissues from animals with BSE	0·03
University of Reading	
19. Evidence for the inheritance of susceptibility to BSE	0·02
University of Bristol	
20. Experimental transmission of feline spongiform encephalopathy to mice	0·03
Sub-total	0·08
Grand Total	3·08

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much money has been allocated to BSE research in each financial year.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has allocated the following funds for BSE research:

	£ million
Outturn expenditure:	
1987-88	0·2
1988-89	0·3
1989-90	1·0
Forecast expenditure:	
1990-91	3·1
1991-92	4·9
1992-93	4·3

This is in addition to the substantial funds that have been made available by the Department of Education and Science for slow virus research and the high priority research that has been set in hand by the Department of Health.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Cambodia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the United Nations to expand and accelerate development and reconstruction aid to Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: A number of United Nations agencies are already providing humanitarian aid in Cambodia and Britain is supporting their work. The United Nations

development programme (UNDP) has indicated that it could begin operations in Cambodia once the Supreme National Council (SNC) has appointed its chairman and United Nations representative and is recognised by the United Nations as a Government structure. We hope that at their forthcoming meeting in Paris the SNC members will resolve their differences over the chairmanship so that the peace process can move forward.

Global Environmental Facility

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the establishment of the global environmental facility under the collective sponsorship of the World bank and the United Nations environment programme and development programme.

Mrs. Chalker: I warmly welcome the establishment of the global environment facility (GEF). It is designed to help developing countries tackle global environmental problems including climate change, ozone depletion, pollution of international waters and the loss of biological diversity. Under climate change, for example, the GEF is likely to finance energy efficiency and energy conservation projects. It will provide grants for projects in developing countries which have substantial global benefits but would not be justified solely by the national benefits to the country concerned. All major donor countries and a number of developing countries are likely to contribute to the Facility. It will be managed jointly by the World bank, the United Nations environment programme and the United Nations development programme.

Britain is one of the first and leading contributors to the GEF. We will be contributing £40·3 million to the core facility of the GEF. We are contributing a further $15 million (approximately £7·8 million) to the funding mechanism established in June under the Montreal protocol to help developing countries phase out ozone depletion substances, which we hope to see managed as part of the GEF.

Our contribution will be managed by the Overseas Development Administration, but is separate from our aid budget for developing countries. ODA officials will attend the semi annual meeting of participants of the GEF which will agree its work programme. The first investments are likely to be approved from next June.

PRIME MINISTER

Minister for Industry

Sir John Farr: To ask the Prime Minister if he will dismiss the Minister for Industry, and appoint a Minister designated with the specific task of recovering the disappearing presence of home industry on the world stage.

The Prime Minister: No. The Government are pursuing policies to promote an environment in which business can flourish. The United Kingdom's share of world trade in manufactures has stabilised after decades of decline, and is set to rise in 1990 for the second year running.

Nuclear Weapons Treaties

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the policies to be advanced by the United Kingdom delegation to the non-proliferation and nuclear test ban negotiations starting on 7 January.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom delegation to the partial test ban treaty amendment conference will make clear our view that war is best prevented by keeping a sensible mix of conventional and nuclear weapons which would present any possible aggressor with risks out of proportion to any possible gain. If United Kingdom nuclear forces are to be a sure deterrent they must be kept effective and up to date: that requires nuclear testing.

D Notices

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Prime Minister how many D notices have been issued since August and how many involved *(a)* terrorism and *(b)* the Gulf.

The Prime Minister: None.

Health Service Pay Report

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Prime Minister when the second supplement to the seventh report of the review body for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and the professions applied to medicine will be published.

The Prime Minister: The review body's second supplement, which deals with the pay of senior nurses and midwives after the introduction of a new pay structure on 1 January 1991, is being published today. The Government are most grateful to the review body for the additional work they have undertaken to prepare this report.

The report recommends that the pay spine and pay ranges under the new structure should be as proposed in joint evidence by the staff and management sides of the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council, and that the rates of London weighting payable should be the same as those which senior managers currently receive. The Government have decided to accept the review body's recommendations.

Government Functions

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), *Official Report*, 30 November, column *504*, if he will now answer questions concerning *(a)* the membership of Cabinet sub-committees, *(b)* the internal workings of Government and *(c)* advice given to Ministers.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 30 November at column *504*.

Press Briefings

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), *Official Report*, 3 December, column *44*, whether he will set out the reasons for continuing the confidential daily briefings for journalists by his press secretary.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 3 December at column *44*.

Minister for Science

Dr. Bray: To ask the Prime Minister if he will appoint a Minister for Science, Technology and Research with responsibility for the co-ordination of government science and technology policy, the science budget, the research councils, common service research organisations including the Meteorological Office, and for the representation of Britain in European Community and other international science councils.

The Prime Minister: No. I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 11 December at column *330*.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list any opinion surveys conducted by, for or on behalf of the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that he received from my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, earlier today.

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will visit Jordan to discuss ecological problems of a Gulf war;

(2) if he will visit Iran to discuss ecological problems of a Gulf war;

(3) if he will visit Yemen to discuss ecological problems of a Gulf war;

(4) if he will discuss with EEC leaders the possibility of a group of Prime Ministers going to Baghdad to discuss the human and ecological effects of a Gulf war and Iraq's view of middle eastern boundaries and ethnic questions.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Debt

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current total amount outstanding on the national debt; if he will express the figure as a percentage of gross domestic product; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: Net public sector debt was £150·6 billion at end March 1990. This represented 28 per cent. of gross domestic product and compares with a net public sector debt of 51 per cent. of gross domestic product at end March 1979.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the savings to the Treasury in reduced interest payments caused by the repayment of the national debt for each year since 1987.

Mr. Maples: I estimate that the reduction in interest payments as a result of the successive public sector debt repayments since 1987 will be approximately £3 billion every year.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the Treasury has reduced the national debt for each year since 1987.

Mr. Maples: The figures requested are given in the table:

Net public sector debt

	£ billion	*Percentage of GDP*[1]
At end March		
1987	171·8	43
1988	171·4	38
1989	157·8	32
1990	150·6	28

[1] Gross domestic product adjusted for the abolition of domestic rates.

Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to remove local authority borrowing from the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on allowing local authorities to borrow money in the open market.

Mr. Maples: Local authorities' powers to borrow money are set out in Part IV of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Within those constraints, there is no limit on the proportion authorities may borrow on the market.

Welfare and Social Security

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to propose the introduction into United Kingdom law of article 13(g) of the sixth directive of the European Community regarding the supply of goods and services linked to welfare and social security work.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Group 7, schedule 6 of the VAT Act 1983 reflects article 13A1(g) of the directive by allowing VAT exemption for the supply, otherwise than for profit, by a charity or public body of welfare services and of goods supplied in connection therewith.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what definition of real convergence is used for the purpose of policy development in respect of economic and monetary union.

Mr. Maude: A number of factors need to be taken into account when assessing the degree of economic convergence among member states of the Community. These include inflation differentials between member states, budget balances in member states, progress towards completion of the single market, and progress towards increasing labour market flexibility in member states.

Media Advisory Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the media advisory service has been made operational in connection with the Gulf crisis; if he will name the chairman of the media advisory service; and whether the Central Office of Information report entitled "A Plan for a Media Advisory Service: The No Win War" will be made available to the House.

Mr. Maples: There are no plans at present to activate the media advisory service in connection with the Gulf

crisis. The chairman designate of the service has not yet been announced. The Central Office of Information report entitled, "A Plan for a Media Advisory Service: The No Win War", was intended for inter-departmental discussion and restricted in its circulation.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect the increase in duty on cigarettes in the 1990 Budget had on the retail prices index.

Mr. Maples: The increase in excise duties on cigarettes in the 1990 Budget added nearly 0·2 percentage points to the retail prices index, assuming that it was passed on in full by retailers.

Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Maude: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 17 December. The Minister of State for Corporate Affairs and I represented the United Kingdom.

Agreement was reached on the general principles which will form the basis of the system for excise controls after 1992. The raising of travellers' allowances was also discussed and it was decided that an agreement should be reached before 31 March 1991. Meanwhile significant progress was made in discussing derogations from the present limits for Denmark and Ireland. As a result, we understand that Ireland will substantially increase her limits on private travellers' duty paid purchases from 1 January 1991. This will be of considerable benefit to traders in Northern Ireland.

An agreement in principle to a common position on the Money Laundering Directive was also reached and, once the legal text has been satisfactorily finalised, this common position should now be formally adopted shortly. The proposed directive is due to take effect from 1 January 1993 and will assist member states in countering the laundering of profits from drug trafficking.

Aid to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe was discussed in the light of agreements for food aid and other assistance reached at the European Council. A proposal to offer guarantees to the European Investment Bank, which would enable the bank to make loans to Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Romania, was also discussed. The Council agreed in principle to the participation of the Community in a loan to Czechoslovakia along with other members of the G24 and possibly the oil producing Arab states.

Discussion of the Investment Services Directive and of a proposal for a reinsurance pool for export credits to eastern Europe was postponed.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if there are any plans to harmonise VAT on children's clothing, food and books.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: While the European Commission has made certain VAT harmonisation proposals, the Government have consistently made it clear that it does not consider centrally determined tax approximation necessary or desirable for completion of the single market. The United Kingdom's position is ultimately safeguarded, in that changes to EC tax law require the unanimous agreement of member states.

North Sea Oil

Mr. David Young: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the profits likely to accrue to the oil industry in the North sea arising from the increased price of oil.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* Profits accruing to the oil industry in the North sea depend on many factors and it is not possible at this stage to assess the effect of higher oil prices with precision. However, in terms of broad magnitude the increase in net of tax profits in the second half of 1990 may be around £¾ billion.

ENERGY

Peat

Mr. Aitken: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether, in the light of current concern over peat extraction, his Department will reconsider the inclusion of peat on the Department's list of renewable energy sources.

Mr. Moynihan: Over the past few years my Department has undertaken some limited research and development into the use of peat as an industrial fuel covering both the technical aspects and market potential of peat. Our recent studies have concluded that for industrial applications peat is not an economic proposition and the only real market for peat as a fuel is in the domestic sector (the traditional use of peat in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland). There is therefore no justification for the Department of Energy to fund further research in this sector once the results of the present studies have been published. Some of the data obtained about peat as part of our research programme should make a useful contribution to the conservation activities undertaken by organisations such as the Nature Conservancy Council and Royal Society for Nature Conservation.

Energy Supply

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's policy on promoting the use of recycled materials, renewable energies and combined heat and power schemes at *(a)* the energy technology support unit at Harwell and *(b)* other departmental establishments were relevant to his Department's activities.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government's policies for the use of recycled materials, renewable energies and combined heat and power are set out in the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance". My Department's policy is to stimulate the development and application of renewable sources of energy, including energy from waste, wherever they have prospects of being economically competitive and environmentally acceptable. In support of this policy my Department has a substantial, and increasing, research and development programme. My Department also actively promotes the wider use of combined heat and power wherever it is economic through our best practice programme.

Project management and guidance on technical aspects of these programmes is provided by the energy technology

support unit at Harwell and the building research energy conservation support unit. There are no other relevant Department of Energy establishments.

Thermonuclear Fusion Reactor

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he plans to put forward at the next European ministerial Research Council on 21 December on the international thermonuclear experimental fusion reactor project.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no plans to discuss the international thermonuclear experimental reactor project at the next meeting of the European Research Council on 21 December.

Electricity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the average interruption of supply in minutes in the area of East Midlands Electricity in 1990 so far;

(2) if he will list by electricity companies all interruptions of supply involving 10,000 consumers or more occurring on or after Friday 7 December indicating the commencement and conclusions of the interruptions in each case.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested covers matters which are the responsibility of the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he, his officials or advisers first became aware that Welsh Water was to buy, was buying or had bought shares in South Wales Electricity.

Mr. Wakeham: My officials were informed on 13 December 1990 of the purchase of a stake in South Wales Electricity plc by Welsh Water plc.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he had with the international stock exchange regarding the maximum percentage of share capital in the flotation of the regional electricity distribution companies that could be reserved for customers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's stockbroking advisers, James Capel, discussed the degree of customer preference with the interntional stock exchange before the prospectus was published.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has investigated the first two days' trading of shares in South Wales Electricity; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any proposal to debar Kleinwort Benson from acting on behalf of companies intending to acquire post-flotation stakes in the newly privatised electricity distribution companies, while it is still acting as his adviser on privatising the electricity industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am satisfied with the provisions governing conflict of interest in Kleinwort Benson Limited's contract as my adviser on electricity privatisation.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any of the firms advising him or his Department were allowed to participate in the buying or selling of the regional electricity company shares or advise or act as brokers to any third parties who did so participate.

Mr. Wakeham: In so far as the relevant firms are engaged in such business their activities are governed by provisions in their contracts concerning conflict of interest.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with Kleinwort Benson about potential conflict of interest in its advice to him on the privatisation of the electricity distribution companies and the advice it gave to other major investors on the acquisition of a stake in South Wales Electricity subsequent to its flotation on 11 December.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him today in connection with Kleinwort Benson Limited's role as my adviser on electricity privatisation. I have no reason to believe that Kleinwort Benson Limited has acted otherwise than in accordance with the terms of its contract with regard to conflict of interest.

Electricity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of applicants using *(a)* customer application forms and *(b)* public application forms were (i) unsuccessful in applying for shares in the regional electricity companies' flotation and (ii) also had their cheques cashed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Approximately 3 per cent. of people applying as customers did not receive an allocation in their supplying company. Where no allocation was made, cheques were returned without being cashed where practicable. The main case where this was not practicable was where people had made separate applications for a number of different companies on one application form. As each application has to be processed separately, no information is available as to the number of such forms which were entirely unsuccessful.

Similarly, as non-customers were able to apply for as many of the 12 regional electricity companies as they liked, no figures are available as to the number of such people who received no shares in any of the companies.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the Director General of the Office of Electricity Regulation regarding mergers and takeovers involving the 12 electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department was consulted on the appointment of a firm of parliamentary consultants by the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy why he has agreed to exclude the disposal of their whole retail interests by a regional electricity company from the real estate clawback arrangements covering the disposal of other property.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) on 19 November at column *6*.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to review the structure of the electricity distribution industry of England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have no such plans.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to review the role of Kleinwort Benson as his advisers on the electricity supply industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I do not expect to review the role of Kleinwort Benson before the privatisation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales is complete.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the cashing of cheques accompanying unsuccessful applications for shares in the 12 electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The share information office and my Department have received a small number of representations on the presentation of cheques for unsuccessful applications. By today a substantial proportion of those applicants who have had cheques cashed should have received returned money cheques.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy on mergers, takeovers and stake-building regarding the 12 newly privatised electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on Tuesday 18 December 1990, *Official Report*, columns *97-98*.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any of the firms advising any of the regional electricity companies were allowed to participate in the buying or selling of regional electricity company shares or advise or act as brokers to any third parties who did so participate.

Mr. Wakeham: The terms under which the regional electricity companies employed advisors for the recent flotation are matters for the companies.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his most up-to-date estimate of the amounts arising from the encashment of cheques of unsuccessful or scaled-down applications for shares in the 12 electricity distribution companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The total value of all cheques cashed under the United Kingdom public offer was approximately £5·3 billion. Of this approximately £4·2 billion was repaid to the public as a result of scaled-down or unsuccessful applications. The remaining £1·1 billion represents the amount paid by the public as the first instalment for the shares sold to them.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he, his officials or advisers had discussions with any retailing interests before deciding to exclude the disposal of the whole of their retail concern by a regional electricity company from the real estate clawback arrangements; and whether there have been any such discussions since.

Mr. Wakeham: Neither I nor my officials have had or are aware of any such discussions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to make an estimate, based on previous privatisations, of the proportion of the shares in each of the regional electricity companies that will be owned by the general public 12 months after flotation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the surveys referred to in his answer of 17 December to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested is as follows:

1985

Cardiff Energy Action City Public Awareness Survey
Department of Energy 'Breakfast Specials' Postal Questionnaire and Analysis
Energy Efficiency and The Growth in the Energy Management Movement
Industrial Energy Survey
Energy Saver Show 1985
'Monergy" Campaign Evaluation—Domestic Consumers
Energy Efficiency Year Booklet Recall Survey
'Monergy' Campaign Evaluation—Industry & Commerce
'Energy Matters' Pilot Evaluation
Marketing of Waste Heat Recovery Systems
'Monergy' TV Commercial Communication Check

1986

Consumer Attitudes to Heating Systems
Energy Booklet Follow-up Survey
Survey of Exploration and Appraisal Activity, 1986 and 1987
Direct Mail Research Test ('Monergy' Booklet)
Survey of the Impact of the EC Non-nuclear Energy R&D Programmes in the UK
Energy Labelling of Houses
Autumn Tracking (Energy Efficiency—Domestic)
Autumn Tracking (Energy Efficiency—Industrial)
1986 'Monergy' Campaign Development
'Monergy' Campaign Evaluation; Domestic Sector—Stage 2
Energy Labelling of Houses (Householders)
Consumer Attitudes to Cavity Insulation

1987

Efficiency Scrutiny of Departmental Publications—Readers of "Energy Trends"
Training for Energy Management
Users Perception of Offshore Supplies Office
Private Generation of Electricity (including an update on Heat and Power plants)
'Monergy' News Research
Performance Measurement of "FOCUS" Journal
Energy Saving Measures in the Home
"Offshore Research Focus"—Readership Survey
Fenestration 2000
The Integration of Energy Forestry into Farming
Public Attitudes to Wind Turbines (Phase 1)
The Severn Barrage—Consultation Exercise No. 1

1988

Public Attitudes to Various Single Wind Turbines
Marketability of Solar House Design
'Monergy News 2' Evaluation Research
Evaluation of EC Energy Demonstration Scheme in the

UK
An Evaluation of the Cost Effectiveness of British Coal Enterprises Ltd.
Monitoring and Targetting in the Paper Converting Industry
Renewable Energy in UK Publications; Readership Survey
Building Research Establishment Conservation Support Unit: Study of the Market for Energy Efficiency Workshops in Local Authorities and Health Authorities
Public Attitudes to Renewable Energy in the UK and Reactions to Schools' Touring Display
Public Attitudes to a 1MW Wind Turbine at Richborough
Electricity Privatisation—Initial Qualitative and Quantitative Research into Attitudes of the General Public
Electricity Privatisation—Surveys to update Key Attitudes
Electricity Privatisation—Initial Survey into Attitudes of Staff of the Regional Electricity Companies
Electricity Privatisation—Qualitative Research into the Attitudes of Financial Advisors to the Public

1989

Stand Performance and Audience Profile Report
Egyptian Oil Market—Survey for the Offshore Supplies Office
Renewable Energy Awareness
Domestic Energy Efficiency—Publications Check
Education Sector Research
Energy Efficiency Office's Best Practice Programme—Energy Consumption Guide Surveys 1989-90
Domestic Target Market Study
Electricity Privatisation—Survey of Opinion Leaders
Publications on Oil and Gas—The "Brown Book" Readers' Survey
Survey of British Coal's Notification Procedures
Public Attitudes Towards Wind Farms
Public Consultation to Establish Reaction to Results from the Severn Barrage project
Electricity Privatisation—Qualitative Research into Possible Methods of Sale and Application Forms
Electricity Privatisation—Quantitative Research into the Impact and Communication of the Regional Electricity Companies' Joint Corporate Campaign
Electricity Privatisation—Qualitative Research into Perceptions of the Regional Electricity Companies and How They Should Be Described to the Public
Electricity Privatisation—Quantitative Update of Key Investment Attitudes on a Regional Basis
Electricity Privatisation—Qualitative Research into the Appeal of Various Incentive Options
Electricity Privatisation—Qualitative and Quantitative Investigation of Behaviour and Attitudes at the Time of Water Privatisation and the Implications for the Regional Electricity Companies

1990

Electricity Privatisation—Quantitative Investigation of Possible Investment Behaviour on a Regional Basis
Attitude Survey in the Locality of the Windfarm at Delabole, Cornwall
Regional High Rise Case Studies (Scotland & Northern Ireland)
Market Research into Cavity Wall Insulation in Existing Dwellings (Households)
A Strategy for Energy Efficiency in the Retail Sector
Energy Campaign Evaluation
Domestic Publications Placement Research
Marketability of Passive Solar Design in Non-domestic Buildings
Electricity Generators' Research
Atomic Energy Authority Video Research
Regional High Rise Case Studies (England & Wales)
Market Research into Cavity Wall Insulation in Existing Dwellings (Local Authorities etc.)
The Collection of Fuel Usage Data for Good Practice Studies
The Markets for Renewable Energy
Renewable Energy Course Module for Tertiary Education
'Green Show' Attendance Research
The Potential for Low-Energy Lighting in Housing
Lighting Survey of Households
Survey of the Textiles & Leather Industries in the Yorkshire & Humberside Region
Electricity Privatisation—Qualitative Research into Advertising Campaign for the Flotation
Identification of Key Issues for Monitoring and Targetting to Smaller Estates
Current Level of Use of Energy and Environmental Calculation Methods by Building Designers
'Energy Efficiency in Buildings' Booklets Research
Impact Assessment on Decision-takers of Energy Efficiency Office's Best Practice Programme on Buildings
Impact Assessment—Mid-Career College Domestic Condensing Boiler Seminar '90
Non-technical barriers to Small-scale Hydro Energy
Electricity Privatisation—Quantitative Research to Monitor the Impact and Communication of the Flotation Marketing Programme, on a Regional Basis
Electricity Privatisation—Quantitive Research to Assess the Likely Investment Behaviour of Registrants

These surveys do not include the monthly, quarterly and annual questionnaires and surveys which form the basis for compiling the Department's energy statistics.

Piper Alpha

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the actions he has taken to date in response to the Cullen report into the Piper Alpha disaster.

Mr. Wakeham: I have secured the agreement of Cabinet colleagues with relevant responsibilities, and of the Cabinet collectively, to the acceptance of all Lord Cullen's recommendations. The detailed arrangements for the implementation of the recommendations are in hand and are being progressed as rapidly as is consistent with fully effective implementation.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the proposal for a Council decision concerning the promotion of energy efficiency in the European Community under the SAVE programme.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy attended the meeting of the Council of Energy Ministers on 29 October, at which the Commission's communication on specific actions for vigorous energy efficiency was introduced, and welcomed the initiative. The proposal for a Council decision in support of the SAVE programme represents a sensible approach to the rationalisation of the European Community's work on energy efficiency, and we are working to ensure it results in effective and properly co-ordinated measures in those areas where they are appropriate.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what input he expects to make from his Department into the energy conservation and greenhouse gas limitation programme of the new global environmental facility jointly established by the World bank and the United Nations environment and development programmes.

Mrs. Chalker: I have been asked to reply and refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave today to his question to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

General Practitioner Service

Mr. Butler: To ask the Lord President of the Council whether he has any plans to provide a general practitioner service for hon. Members within the Palace of Westminster during sitting hours of the House.

Mr. MacGregor: No. During its recent consideration of the future development of the Members' medical surveillance scheme, and of related proposals being considered by the Administration Committee for the introduction of a comprehensive occupational health service for staff of the House, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee made a number of recommendations for enhancing the medical adviser's role and extending the cover provided by the nursing sister. Those resolutions were agreed by the Services Committee and are published in its Minutes of Proceedings of 24 July. The question of a general medical practitioner was considered during the course of the Sub-Committee's deliberations but was rejected on the grounds that such a service would run counter to current established procedures and would therefore not be in the best interests of Members or staff.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Managing Agents

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidelines he is issuing to training and enterprise councils in the quality requirements expected of training managing agents in the forthcoming competitive contracts and tenders with regard to (1) the number of monitoring visits to companies expected of such managers each year, (2) the training reviews of each trainee, (3) the off-the-job training requirements, (4) the percentage of trainees expected to reach national vocational qualifications levels 2 and 3 and (5) the staff qualifications of the training managers and their own training programme.

Mr. Jackson: Training and enterprise councils agree with my Department a strategy for managing quality. This is an integral part of their corporate and business plans. These plans form the foundation of contractual arrangements between TECs and my Department. This quality strategy sets out the mechanisms the TEC will use to ensure improvements in value for money and relevance of their provision, and includes their arrangements to ensure the capability and efficiency of their training providers. As a minimum, TECs are required to maintain standards in line with the approved training organisation criteria or an equivalent locally agreed standard.

Disabled People

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on legislation in other countries of the EEC and elsewhere that outlaws discrimination on the grounds of disability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Both France and the United States of America have recently passed laws concerned with discrimination on the grounds of disability and similar legislation already applies in Canada and parts of Australia. Some EC countries other than France have laws apparently seeking to prohibit discrimination on any grounds; others take a different approach—for example, by the use of quota systems in the area of employment.

The question of legislation is discussed in the consultative document, "Employment and Training for People with Disabilities", issued by my Department earlier this year. The Government remain to be convinced that legislation to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of disability would be right for this country, for reasons given in the consultative document.

Skill Centres

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many skill centres have been sold; how much revenue has been obtained by the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The sales of the training businesses at 51 of the 60 skill centres, the Skills Training Agency head office, mobile training service, sales teams and colleges were all completed by the 31 May 1990. The sales involved payments from the Government to the purchasers of some £14 million. the unsold skill centres have been closed and their equipment and the Department's residual property interests are being sold. This process has not been completed, so it is not yet possible to state the final proceeds of the sale.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any proportion of the proceeds of the sale of machinery and equipment from skill centres will be remitted to the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The plant and machinery from the five regional offices and nine skill centres which have not been moved to the private sector were sold by four public auctions in June and July 1990. The sales produced a total gross realisation of some £940,000 ex-VAT with further minor sales realising some £19,000. Net income to the Government totalled some £0·86 million.

Special Needs Trainees

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take action to stop training and enterprise councils requiring training managers to achieve the same level of positive outcomes for trainees who have special needs as they do for other trainees.

Mr. Jackson: It is for training and enterprise councils to negotiate appropriate targets for positive outcomes with their training managers.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many trainees with special needs were on employment training in *(a)* 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90; and how many he expects to be on employment training in (i) 1990-91 and (ii) 1991-92.

Mr. Jackson: Employment training is aimed at long term unemployed people many of whom have special training needs. Some groups are identified separately and the table gives details of these groups as a proportion of all starts in 1988-89 and in 1989-90. No forecasts are available for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Employment training
Special needs groups as a proportion of all starts

	[1]*1988-89 percentage*	*1989-90 percentage*
English as a second language	1	1
People with disabilities	12	11
Literacy and numeracy training need	18	15

[1] September 1988 on.

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to ensure that where training and enterprise councils award contracts to training managers for employment training without making above-average allowances for trainees' special needs the future provision for such trainees will continue to be provided.

Mr. Jackson: Training and enterprise councils are expected to set out in their corporate and business plans how they will make provision for trainees with special needs. TECs are responsible for deciding which training managers they should contract with.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much of the expenditure on *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* outdoor advertising, *(d)* exhibition material and *(e)* research for action for jobs in 1988-89 was spent through the Central Office of Information.

Mr. Jackson: All the expenditure on *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* outdoor advertising and *(e)* research was spent through and in conjunction with the Central Office of Information for "action for jobs" in 1988-89. Expenditure for *(d)* exhibition material was not placed through the Central Office of Information.

Special Needs Employees

Mr. Bellotti: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the extent to which trainees on employment training with special needs require above-average funding.

Mr. Jackson: It is for training and enterprise councils and TEED area offices to assess appropriate funding for employment training providers, including those catering for trainees with special needs.

Full Employment UK

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations his Department has received from Full Employment UK; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Full Employment UK has made a number of representations to my Department. As with all such representations, the arguments and suggestions have been noted and considered.

Regional Policy

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations his Department has received from the Employment Institute in respect of regional policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: We are aware of the recent work in this area by the Employment Institute. The arguments and suggestions in the work have been noted.

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of people employed in the tobacco industry in England and Wales *(a)* at the latest date and *(b)* five years ago.

Mr. Jackson: The available information is from censuses of employment The most recent figures are for September 1987. There were then 13,700 employees employed in the tobacco industry in England and Wales. This compares with a figure of 20,300 in September 1984 when the previous census of employment was taken. The figures exclude the self-employed.

Pregnant Women (EC Directive)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists have been consulted about the new EC directive on the protection of pregnant women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My Department consulted over 200 organisations about the draft EC directive on the protection of pregnant women, including the Royal College of Midwives. The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists was not consulted.

Training Agency Accounts

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the White Paper, "Accounts for the Training Agency for 1989-90 and 1990-91" will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Jackson: It had been planned to lay the White Paper "Accounts for the Training Agency for 1989-90" before Parliament in December 1990, but their preparation has been delayed, and they will now be published in January 1991. The Training Agency has now ceased to exist as a separate operation entirely, and no further White Paper accounts will be prepared.

Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mr. Bevan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting held in Brussels on 18 December.

Mr. Howard: The Council had a useful meeting.

The Council formally adopted its common position on a directive to control the use of asbestos in the workplace.

The Council reached a common position on the directive concerned with the health and safety of temporary workers, based on article 118A of the treaty. The agreement followed a compromise proposed from the United Kingdom which enabled member states who still had difficulties with the text to lift their reserves.

The Council agreed in principle a proposed decision to designate 1992 as European Year of Health and Safety. The forthcoming Luxembourg presidency was invited to make progress on this decision in the light of the awaited

Opinion of the European Parliament; and also on proposed amendments to existing regulations on social security for migrant workers and a resolution on the Commission's third action programme on equal treatment for men and women. The Council had an exchange of views on the impact of current demographic changes in the Community.

The Italian presidency sought progress on proposals from the European Commission for directives under articles 100 and 100A of the treaty, designed to regulate the rights and benefits available to part-time and temporary workers. As at the previous Social Affairs Council on 26th November, no progress was made. Many member states continued to have serious concerns about the substance of these proposals and to hold that the Commission should have based both proposals on article 100 of the treaty (requiring unanimity in the Council) because they are concerned with the interests and rights of working people.

The Council provided further vindication of the Government's approach to social affairs at Community level. The Government continue to play a full and active part so as to ensure that the United Kingdom's interests are fully represented. The Government support a social dimension to the Community, where this helps to create and sustain employment. Progress can be made when based on sensible, well prepared proposals, particularly in the field of health and safety at work. The Government will continue to give their support to measures of this kind.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Correspondence

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) when he intends to reply to the letters sent to him on *(a)* 2 August by the hon. Member for Oldham, West regarding (i) households below average incomes and (ii) invalidity benefit claims in the north-west region, *(b)* 13 August regarding private residential and nursing home costs and *(c)* 16 October asking why he has not replied to these two earlier letters; and what are the reasons for the delay in replying;

(2) if he will now give an immediate reply to the letters of the hon. Member for Oldham, West of 2 August regarding details of the households below average incomes tables and invalidity benefit claims in the north-west region and nationally, of 13 August regarding income support levels for residential and nursing homes and 16 October asking him why he had not replied to these two earlier letters; what are the reasons for the delay in replying to these letters; and what percentage of the letters to him he does not answer within four months.

Mr. Newton: I wrote to the hon. Member on 7 December with the information he had requested on invalidity benefit figures, and also in response to a large number of queries concerning residential care and nursing homes, insofar as the relevant information was available. At the same time, I indicated that I would be writing to him separately about the other more complex information he had requested about changes in incomes. I expect to do so this week. I regret that it has not been possible to respond to all his requests as quickly as I would have wished.

State Pension Scheme

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the Government's estimate of how many people would leave the state pension scheme and at what cost; and what are the latest actual figures.

Miss Widdecombe: In his report on the financial effects of the 1986 Social Security Bill on the national insurance fund, the Government actuary said that there was no basis for making a firm estimate of the likely increase in those contracting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme (SERPS) as the result of the provisions contained in the Bill.

The latest actual figures show that the total amount of revenue foregone in 1989-90 was £7·7 billion in respect of some 9·5 million members of contracted out occupational pension schemes in that year and some 3 million people who had taken out personal pensions in 1988-89.

Probation Service

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he received the report commissioned by the Association of Chief Officers of Probation entitled "Surviving Poverty: Probation work and benefits policy"; what response he intends to make; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The report was received in November 1989 and, in response, the Department attended a follow up conference called by the Association of Chief Officers of Probation in May. In addition, DSS matters were further reviewed when a delegation of Probation Service representatives, with the hon. Member for Macclesfield, attended a meeting chaired by the former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard).

Following on from these meetings, the Department has undertaken to consider the implications for discharged prisoners over a wide range of benefit issues. There is also liaison at a local level; for example, the Leeds West office already have regular meetings with local social services and other welfare groups, including prison officers from Armley.

Heating Allowances

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those parts of the United Kingdom where the temperature fell below the Department of Social Security threshold for the payment of additional allowances for heating for pensioners and others over the weekend 8 to 10 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Cold weather payments are available when the average daily temperature is 0 deg. C or below for a period of seven consecutive days. This has not yet happened this winter.

Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he is taking to encourage the use of low-energy light bulbs in his Department's offices and other buildings.

Mr. Jack: A programme to replace tungsten lighting with compact fluorescent, low-energy lighting was

initiated in 1989. Over 98 per cent. of the lighting used in the Department's buildings is of the fluorescent luminaire type. The Department is also committed to an intra-Government initiative seeking to reduce energy consumption on the civil estate by 15 per cent. over five years.

A demonstration project using high-frequency, low energy fluorescent luminaires with ultra-sonic controls is being developed in the Leicester Yeoman St. district office. If this is successful, all new buildings and major refurbishments will normally use this type of lighting.

Community Charge Arrears

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what outside guidance his Department has sought and obtained on the legality within the terms of the Debtors (Scotland) Act 1987 of arrestments from benefits of community charge arrears currently being undertaken in Scotland.

Miss Widdecombe: Departmental officials have been in touch with their colleagues in other interested Departments including the Scottish Office.

Residential Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much his Department pays in total to the elderly residents in private residential homes for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what are the comparable payments for the elderly in county council-owned homes.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department has established a date for publication of the independent research commissioned from the social security research unit of the university of York on whether the social fund is meeting its objectives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 20 November 1990 at column *108*.

Local Offices

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list sites under consideration for the planned Glasgow, Pollok local office; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: A site search has been commissioned by Property Holdings and the findings are likely to be known early next year. For commercial reasons the location of possible sites has to be treated as confidential at this stage.

Income Support

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reasons income support claimants are still receiving transitional protection.

Miss Widdecombe: There are three categories of claimants receiving income support transitional protection:

(i) Some residents of hostels as a result of benefit changes in October 1989;
(ii) Some residents of board and lodging accommodation as a result of benefit changes in April 1989;
(iii) Some former supplementary benefit claimants are receiving transitional protection as a result of the reforms in April 1988.

Special transitional additions for people with former high supplementary benefit additions for domestic assistance are uprated every year. Older and disabled pensioners on income support received a cash increase last October, through improvements to the pensioner premiums which did not erode transitional protection. In addition, increases in mobility allowance and attendance allowance are normally disregarded.

Child Poverty

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department will consider the implications for matters within its responsibility of research conducted by Professor Jonathan Bradshaw of York university for publication by UNICEF into child poverty in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The report is being considered. A response will be sent to the National Children's Bureau and a copy will be sent to the hon. Member.

Pensions

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has completed his review of the disclosure requirements for occupational and personal pension schemes, including unit-linked personal pension plans; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The review has been completed and draft regulations will shortly be referred to the Occupational Pensions Board, in accordance with section 61 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reassess the criteria used to determine the level of pensions paid to category A, ADI and BL pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: We have no plans to do so.

White Finger Disease

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have submitted claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit arising out of white finger disease; how many of the claims have been successful; what amount of money has actually been paid out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available in the form requested. However, on 1 April 1989 there were some 620 assessments current for the prescribed disease vibration white finger.

Water Charges

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department has completed consultations with the water industries on deductions from benefit for payment of water charges.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department and the water industries have now agreed a joint statement of intent, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. It confirms the existing arrangements whereby deductions from benefit may be made to meet water charges and so prevent disconnection of supply or court action, in the same way as already operates satisfactorily with fuel debts. This new administrative framework will come into operation on 1 January 1991.

SCOTLAND

Nurses

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *239*, who will be legally responsible for students working in the wards under the direction and supervision of registered nurses.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The variety of circumstances under which Project 2000 student nurses will work is such that the question of legal responsibility for their action could only be determined by the courts in relation to individual cases.

Homosexuals

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in the Scottish Office figures for sexual offences covering each of the years from 1980 to 1989 inclusive, how many of the *(a)* convictions and *(b)* cautions or equivalent under the categories (i) lewd and libidinous practices and (ii) procuration are accounted for by men involved in consensual homosexual behaviour with other men over the age of 16 years; and in the cases of those convicted (1) what were the charges under which they were successfully prosecuted in each case, (2) what were the 10 highest fines imposed and (3) what were the lengths of all suspended and custodial sentences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Full information is not available but (i) a charge of lewd and libidinous practices would not apply where there is consent and relates only to behaviour directed at children, (ii) there was no man in 1988 and one in 1989 in relation to whom the principal charge proved was procuration under section 80(9) of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980; he was fined £75.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in each of the years from 1980 to 1989 inclusive, how many men between the ages of 16 and 21 years were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned or the equivalent for consensual offences of (i) sodomy, (ii) attempted sodomy, (iii) gross indecency in a private place and (iv) attempted gross indecency in a private place with another man between the ages of 16 and 21 years, contrary to section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1989, and preceding or equivalent legislation; and in the cases of those convicted, how many were (1) fined and what were the 10 highest fines, (2) given suspended sentences and what was the length of each of these and (3) received custodial sentences and in each case what was the length of their sentenced terms of imprisonment or youth custody.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Full information is not available, but

(i) a charge of sodomy is unlikely for consensual offences; the numbers of men aged 16 to 20 in relation to whom a charge of sodomy (probably non-consensual) was proved as a principal charge were one in 1988 and two in 1989. Other than one man who was sentenced in 1989 to three years in custody no man was fined or given a custodial sentence in 1988 or 1989;

(ii) in relation to one man in the age group 16 to 20, a charge of attempted sodomy was proved as the principal charge in 1988; he was not fined or given a custodial sentence; there were none in 1989;

(iii) for no men aged 16 to 20 was a charge of gross indecency proved as the principal charge in 1988 or 1989 but the numbers in relation to whom a homosexual charge was proved under section 80(7) of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 as the principal charge were six in 1988 and three in 1989. In 1988, four men were fined £50, £75, £100 and £150; in 1989, two men were fined £50 and £175. Other than one man who was sentenced in 1988 to 30 days in custody no man received a custodial sentence in 1988 or 1989;

(iv) in relation to no man aged 16 to 20 was a charge of attempted gross indecency proved as the principal charge in 1988 or 1989.

Information on the numbers of persons receiving an official warning, or on the ages of "other" men and whether they were consenting is not available. Information for the years prior to 1988 is not readily available. The figures for 1989 are provisional.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in each of the years from 1980 to 1989 inclusive, how many men over the age of 21 years were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned or the equivalent for consensual offences of (i) sodomy, (ii) attempted sodomy, (iii) gross indecency in a private place and (iv) attempted gross indecency in a private place with another man between the ages of 16 and 21 years contrary to section 80 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, and preceding or equivalent legislation; and in the cases of those convicted, how many were (1) fined and what were the 10 highest fines, (2) given suspended sentences and what were the lengths of these suspended sentences in each case and (3) received custodial sentences and in each of these cases what were the lengths of the terms of imprisonment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Full information is not available, but

(i) a charge of sodomy is unlikely for consensual offences; the numbers of men aged 21 and over in relation to whom a charge of sodomy (probably non-consensual) was proved as the principal charge were six in 1988 and 11 in 1989. Custodial sentences were imposed on five men in 1988 and eight men in 1989. The durations were of 18 months, 18 months, two years, five years and seven years in 1988 and of three months, three years, three years, four years, four years, five years, five years and there was one where there is no separate duration recorded in the statistics in 1989. No men were fined in either year.

(ii) in relation to no man aged 21 or over was a charge of attempted sodomy proved as the principal charge in 1988 or 1989;

(iii) in relation to no man aged 21 or over was a charge of gross indecency proved as the principal charge in 1988 or 1989, but the numbers in relation to whom a homosexual charge was proved under section 80(7) of the Criminal Justice Act (Scotland) Act 1980 as the principal charge were 43 in 1988 and 38 in 1989. In 1988 38 men were fined, the 10 highest fines being £2,000, £300, £300, £250, £250, £250, £200, £200, £200 and £200; in 1989 31 men were fined, the 10 highest fines being £290, £250, £200, £200, £190, £150, £150, £130, £125 and £175. In 1988

three men received custodial sentences of 30 days, 30 days and four years and in 1989 one man received a custodial sentence of 60 days.

(iv) in relation to no man aged 21 or over was a charge of attempted gross indecency proved as the principal charge in 1988 or 1989.

Information on the numbers of other persons receiving an official warning, or on the ages of the "other" men and whether they were consenting, is not available. Information for the years prior to 1988 is not readily available. The figures for 1989 are provisional.

Salmon and Sea Trout

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has, from his monitoring of purse seine net fishing vessels, regarding catches of salmon and sea trout by such methods.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Fishing for salmon and sea trout by purse seine net is prohibited. No information on accidental captures is available.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a list of all the surveys referred to in his answer of 17 December to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

Mr. Lang: I shall place a list of surveys in the Library as soon as possible.

Schools

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to issue his national guidelines for staff development and appraisal in schools.

Mr. Lang: I will issue early in the new year to local authorities national guidelines for staff development and appraisal in schools for implementation over the five year period from school session 1991-92. Similar guidelines for the further education sector will follow shortly.

The guidelines have been prepared following an extensive period of consultation which demonstrated much support for the changes they will bring to Scottish education. They provide a national framework within which education authorities and schools can plan and operate systematic arrangements for the management of staff development and appraisal. They are intended to ensure an appropriate degree of consistency across the country but at the same time allow scope for variation in application to meet local circumstances.

Authorities will be invited to prepare and send to me local schemes which provide for teachers to be appraised at least once every two years so that by the end of June 1996 all teachers should have fully completed the appraisal process at least once. Authorities will be free to determine their own pace of implementation. I expect however that by the beginning of session 1994-95 at least half of the teachers within each authority should be within the appraisal process.

I have powers in the Self-Governing Schools Etc. (Scotland) Act 1989 to introduce appraisal on a statutory basis. I have concluded however as a result of views expressed during the consultation period that implementation of my policy on staff development and appraisal should be on the basis of national guidelines rather than by regulations. I will be monitoring progress on implementation and if our policy objectives are not being attained I will consider the use of regulations.

Some but not all aspects of the guidelines will bring resource implications for authorities. I have already provided cover for additional costs of £2 million in determining next year's grant settlement for authorities. Costs of £4 million will be recognised in the 1992-93 settlement. For the following years I will take into account the further costs involved depending on the progress achieved by authorities. I am also providing specific grant support for in-service training of teachers from 1991-92 to support the requirement in the guidelines for teachers to be trained before they fulfil their roles in the appraisal process. My Department is currently preparing training materials on appraisal which will become available from school session 1991-92.

Higher and Further Education

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take on student union issues and on safeguards for freedom of speech in higher and further education institutions in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am inviting Scottish universities and colleges of higher and further education to take part in discussions of possible action on membership and financing of local student unions and the NUS; the proper use of public funds by unions and the NUS; and also on measures to secure freedom of speech.

Following my recent consultations on the need for measures to secure free speech in Scottish institutions, I have concluded that, in view of their serious obligation to ensure free speech, universities and colleges in Scotland should be asked to introduce on a voluntary basis codes of practice to secure freedom of speech in their institutions. We shall continue to keep under review the arrangements which institutions have for securing free speech and whether any further action should be required.

Scottish Agencies

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps he is taking to ensure proper representation of women on the new bodies which are to replace the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Scottish Development Agency;

(2) how many women have ever served on the boards of *(a)* the Highlands and Islands Development Board and *(b)* the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 17 December 1990]:* My right hon. Friend appointed three women to the Scottish Enterprise Board and two women to the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Board. Members were appointed for their potential personal contribution and not as representatives of any organisation or group.

One woman has served on the Scottish Development Agency Board but none on the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Housing Payments

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what the cost of rent rebate expenditure was in Scotland in 1979-80; and what that cost was in 1989-90;

(2) what the cost of providing rent allowances to tenants in Scotland was in 1979-80; and what that cost was in 1989-90;

(3) how many public sector tenants in Scotland were in receipt of *(a)* standard housing benefit and *(b)* certificated housing benefit in 1989-90;

(4) how many private sector tenants in Scotland were in receipt of *(a)* standard housing benefit and *(b)* certificated housing benefit in 1989-90.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

Number of housing benefit claimants (thousands)

	Receiving income support	*Not receiving income support*	*Expenditure £ million*
1989-90			
Private tenants (rent allowances)	45	35	110
Local authority tenants (rent rebates)	270	210	360

Sources:

(a) Housing benefit management system quarterly count of claims.

(b) 1989-90 local authority subsidy claims and mid-year estimates.

The information requested for 1979-80 is not available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Television Licence

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to reply to the letter of 27 November from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North regarding the television licence contract.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Soon.

Electoral Rolls

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in tabular form from highest to lowest the percentage of the population registered to vote in each constituency.

Mrs. Rumbold: Estimates of the resident population by parliamentary constituency, and hence the percentage of registered electors, are not generally available.

Mill Hill Medical Research Institute

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department will list visits made by the animals (scientific procedures) inspectorate to the National Institute for Medical Research at Mill Hill since the enactment of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, with details of all identified breaches of the controls of the Act and the terms and conditions of licences issued thereunder; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: In common with all other establishments, the National Institute for Medical Research is visited regularly by inspectors and most of these visits are unannounced. Since the 1986 Act came into force, visits have been made to the institute on 49 days, an average of about once a month.

All infringements are reported to the animal procedures committee, but it is not our practice to make public any details about them. It is also not our practice to give details of the terms and conditions of licences.

Prison Boards of Visitors

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum period of time a chairman of a board of visitors of a prison can hold that position; and if there are any specific guidelines.

Mrs. Rumbold: Rule 92(2) of the prison rules and rule 73(2) of the young offender institution rules provide that when a board of visitors is first constituted the Secretary of State shall appoint one of its members to be the chairman for a period not exceeding twelve months. The model constitution which the Department recommends to boards of visitors provides that a chairman should not hold office more than three consecutive years.

Pornography

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proposals his Department has to review and strengthen the law as it relates to the publication and circulation of pornography, with particular reference to the easing of border controls within the European Community in 1992; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations have been made to other member states of the European Community to seek harmonisation of legislation against the publication and circulation of pornography prior to the easing of border controls in 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Criminal law about pornography is a matter for each member state of the Community. The easing of frontier controls in 1992 will not require relaxation of our strict controls against obscene material. We make our views on this subject clear to other member states, with particular stress on pornography involving children. A harmonising exercise would, however, raise questions of Community competence and would not necessarily result in a common standards matching ours.

Radar Detectors

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the advertising of radar detectors for use by motorists and the use of those devices by motorists.

Mr. John Patten: The use of such equipment without a licence granted by the Secretary of State constitutes an offence under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949. It is also an offence at common law to incite another to commit a crime, whether or not the incitement is successful in persuading the person to commit the offence. The courts have held that a company which advertised a device which could detect police radar traps was properly convicted of inciting people who read the advertisement to commit an offence.

Pentobarbitone

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *475*, what guidelines he

issues to practitioners concerning prescription of Pentobarbitone for use by non-practitioners; and what information he collates concerning the numbers of such prescriptions.

Mr. John Patten: The use of the drug by non-practitioners is lawful only when prescribed by and used in accordance with the directions of a medical, dental or veterinary practitioner. It has not been found necessary to issue guidance additional to that contained in the product data sheets and in any literature supplied with the drug or to require central statistical returns.

Infant Life Preservation Act 1929

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to reduce the gestational age where an unborn baby is regarded as being capable of being born alive in the Infant Life Preservation Act 1929.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The matter is being given careful consideration.

Sexual Offences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in each of the years since 1985, in England and Wales, what has been the annual rate of increase or decrease in *(a)* recorded sex offences, *(b)* the clear up rate for sex offences, *(c)* prosecutions for sex offences, *(d)* convictions for sex offences and *(e)* cautions for sex offences, in both (i) numerical and (ii) percentage terms; and what percentage of these increases or decreases in each of the categories *(a)* to *(e)* have involved consensual offences between men over the age of 16 years where both parties have freely participated in the acts concerned; and what categories of sex offences between men are included within these statistics.

Mr. John Patten: A homosexual act in private is not an offence where the parties consent and have attained the age of 21 years. The tables below give information on consensual acts of buggery and attempted buggery of a male of, or over, 21 with another male under the age of 21 with consent (Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 12 as amended by the Sexual Offences Act 1967, section 3(1)).

Table A

Number of offences and offenders for sexual offences 1985 to 1989—England and Wales

Offence	*Recorded offences*	*Clear-up rate (per cent.)*	*Cautions*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
1985					
Sexual offences	21,456	72	2,891	7,257	6,010
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	7	23	30
1986					
Sexual offences	22,684	71	2,872	7,068	5,495
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	3	24	21
1987					
Sexual offences	25,154	75	3,208	8,298	6,231
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	21	13
1988					
Sexual offences	26,529	75	3,577	9,547	7,154
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	17	23
1989					
Sexual offences	29,733	75	3,475	9,967	7,254
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	8	8	17

[1] Unavailable.

Table B

Percentage change in numbers of offences and offenders for sexual offences 1985 to 1989—England and Wales

Offence	*Recorded offences*	*Clear-up rate*[2]	*Cautions*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
1985-86					
Sexual offences	+6	−1	−1	−3	−9
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	[3]−57	[3]+4	[3]−30
1986-87					
Sexual offences	+11	+4	+12	+17	+13
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[3]−13	[3]−38
1987-88					
Sexual offences	+5	0	+12	+15	+15
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[3]−19	[3]+77

Offence	Recorded offences	Clear-up rate[2]	Cautions	Prosecutions	Convictions
1988-89					
Sexual offences	+12	0	−3	+4	+1
Consensual homosexual offences (aged 16+)	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—	[3]−53	[3]−26

[1] Unavailable.
[2] Percentage point change.
[3] Percentages based upon less than 50 cases.

West Yorkshire Fire Service

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the report into West Yorkshire fire service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is not the current practice to publish reports of inspections of fire brigades undertaken by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services. A letter summarising the conclusions reached following the inspection of the West Yorkshire fire service which was conducted in June 1990 was sent to the chairman of the West Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority on 20 July 1990.

Asylum

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for each quarter since 1 January 1989, how many asylum applications were made by nationals of Somalia (i) at British posts overseas, (ii) on entry to the United Kingdom and (iii) after entry to the United Kingdom; in each of the above categories, how many of those applications were from dependants of a principal asylum applicant or of someone granted refugee status or exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom;

(2) for each quarter since 1 January 1989, how many asylum applications were made by nationals of Sri Lanka (i) at British posts overseas, (ii) on entry to the United Kingdom and (iii) after entry to the United Kingdom; in each of the above categories, how many of those applications were from dependants of a principal asylum applicant or of someone granted refugee status or exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom;

(3) for each quarter since 1 January 1989, and by country, how many asylum applications were made (i) at British posts overseas, (ii) on entry to the United Kingdom and (iii) after entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to the hon. Member.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each quarter since 1 January 1989, and by country, how many passengers were refused entry to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information by nationality is given in the following table:

Passengers refused leave to enter the United Kingdom and removed: by nationality, 1989-90

Geographical region/ nationality	1989 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	1990 Q1	Q2	Q3
Western Europ (excluding EC)							
Austria	26	39	32	16	24	22	20
Cyprus	61	37	57	58	40	27	44
Finland	33	13	18	10	8	15	10
Malta	7	5	9	7	8	3	7
Norway	19	27	26	7	23	27	26
Sweden	42	49	49	34	47	41	39
Switzerland	22	18	30	22	27	14	21
Turkey	618	1,082	286	122	82	71	120
Yugoslavia	166	295	322	281	216	230	240
Eastern Europe							
Bulgaria	2	5	6	7	15	9	11
Czechoslovakia	4	2	10	2	1	8	24
GDR	2	—	2	7	7	45	2
Hungary	5	8	7	4	4	13	12
Poland	23	43	41	31	25	22	27
Romania	2	8	3	—	3	5	5
USSR	15	13	13	68	10	29	48
Americas							
Argentina	19	18	22	12	25	15	16
Barbados	6	7	12	6	6	10	8
Brazil	110	227	203	179	217	256	203
Canada	18	27	43	22	21	20	36
Chile	24	26	22	11	8	20	19
Colombia	116	196	194	133	130	265	177
Cuba	—	1	—	1	—	1	5
Guyana	11	9	10	14	15	11	8
Jamaica	236	195	202	170	160	140	135
Mexico	33	39	45	30	29	35	42
Peru	18	35	31	34	36	37	33
Trinidad and Tobago	18	16	24	18	32	31	37

Geographical region/ nationality	1989 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	1990 Q1	Q2	Q3
USA	261	280	337	270	313	321	345
Uruguay	5	3	4	2	4	5	4
Venezuela	7	7	11	2	6	16	9
Africa							
Algeria	391	543	1,198	961	748	81	84
Egypt	6	5	16	6	8	9	13
Ethiopia	3	6	5	4	8	7	16
Ghana	109	102	124	124	110	118	123
Kenya	40	34	48	48	40	47	58
Libya	3	9	9	7	8	11	12
Mauritius	41	43	57	58	57	51	54
Morocco	253	305	1,051	466	353	102	112
Nigeria	193	203	189	174	190	172	191
Sierra Leone	44	43	51	97	66	62	102
Somalia	8	4	6	14	18	2	16
South Africa	73	118	115	83	138	126	151
Sudan	10	3	12	6	5	2	7
Tanzania	21	22	34	34	28	22	30
Tunisia	50	42	58	60	81	44	29
Uganda	62	47	52	46	60	33	46
Zambia	25	24	29	43	28	25	21
Zimbabwe	36	25	30	47	29	44	48
Indian sub-continent							
Bangladesh	87	87	151	103	63	79	82
India	111	114	125	115	114	131	124
Pakistan	75	74	107	101	81	93	147
Middle East							
Iran	161	62	141	124	62	79	124
Iraq	6	15	15	5	7	11	27
Israel	53	57	59	50	53	55	71
Jordan	3	5	9	7	3	8	10
Kuwait	2	13	3	—	—	1	—
Lebanon	17	14	27	25	18	19	21
Saudi Arabia	10	7	25	5	3	4	4
Syria	9	15	19	11	18	12	17
Remainder of Asia							
China	21	23	25	14	5	6	27
Indonesia	4	4	5	5	4	8	1
Japan	65	52	49	46	60	58	66
Malaysia	93	261	141	123	107	256	235
Philippines	25	29	37	20	24	45	53
Singapore	28	16	15	18	14	16	18
Sri Lanka	28	27	30	22	23	15	29
Thailand	14	19	14	5	7	14	20
BDTC Hong Kong	33	45	49	51	40	75	68
Australasia							
Australia	35	40	38	33	45	58	52
New Zealand	31	29	42	19	29	39	34
British overseas citizens	4	8	16	5	13	9	12
Other countries not elsewhere specified	249	285	329	257	262	344	336
Stateless	175	173	234	236	246	330	357
All nationalitie (excluding EC)	4,636	5,782	6,860	5,258	4,818	4,487	4,782

United States Secret Service

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any special powers of arrest have been allocated to United States secret service officers stationed in, or visiting, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has any plans to issue revised guidance to local authorities about the prosecution of those who trade illegally on Sundays;

(2) if he will make it his policy to write to those companies which have openly admitted that they are trading illegally on Sundays reminding them of the law on this matter;

(3) what information he has concerning the names of those retail traders in central London which traded

illegally on Sunday 16 December; and what steps are being taken by his Department to ensure that they are prosecuted.

Mrs. Rumbold: Responsibility for the enforcement of the provisions governing Sunday trading in the Shops Act 1950 is vested in local authorities, which are well aware of their responsibilities. The Government do not receive information directly about traders alleged to have broken the law in this respect.

Crime

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total number of crimes in each police force area in England and Wales in each of the last three years, for which figures are available *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* burglaries, *(c)* theft/handling of stolen goods, *(d)* forgery/fraud and *(e)* criminal damages, including vandalism, indicating in each case (i) percentage increases for each year from 1978 and (ii) the clear up rate percentage change against 1978;

(2) what was the number of attacks against the police or police stations in Bolton in each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(3) what was the number of attacks against police or police stations in each police authority in England and Wales in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Salman Rushdie

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the source of press briefings to the *Sunday Express* on the financial arrangements for the security of Mr. Salman Rushdie.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no knowledge of the source of the press speculation on this subject. The arrangements for Mr. Rushdie's protection are a matter for the police.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for each quarter since 1 January 1989, how many applicants for entry clearance for (i) settlement and (ii) temporary stay were *(a)* decided, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused in each country.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Quarterly data for the Indian sub-continent and Sri Lanka are given in the table. Corresponding information for other countries is not available centrally.

Applications for entry clearance to the United Kingdom

Number of persons

Country	*Settlement*			*Temporary stay*[1]		
	Decided	*Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*	*Decided*	*Granted*[2]	*Refused initially*
Bangladesh						
1989:						
1st quarter	1,760	1,470	440	2,250	1,800	450
2nd quarter	1,690	1,330	470	3,390	2,770	630
3rd quarter	1,540	1,210	380	3,950	3,260	690
4th quarter	1,330	920	490	2,640	1,930	710
Year	6,320	4,930	1,780	12,240	9,760	2,480
1990:						
1st quarter	1,350	980	520	2,410	1,780	630
2nd quarter	1,290	1,040	390	3,510	2,820	710
India						
1989:						
1st quarter	1,080	840	270	19,710	18,140	1,610
2nd quarter	1,050	820	290	43,650	41,130	2,590
3rd quarter	1,180	1,060	180	28,810	26,450	2,430
4th quarter	1,240	1,010	280	16,620	14,930	1,730
Year	4,540	3,730	1,020	108,780	100,640	8,360
1990:						
1st quarter	1,280	1,060	280	21,840	19,550	2,360
2nd quarter	1,010	810	240	46,610	42,140	4,540
Pakistan						
1989:						
1st quarter	1,950	1,360	710	10,670	8,920	1,770
2nd quarter	2,220	1,630	680	22,300	19,830	2,510
3rd quarter	1,760	1,320	510	20,330	17,340	3,060
4th quarter	1,720	1,130	690	11,790	9,470	2,380
Year	7,650	5,430	2,580	65,090	55,550	9,730
1990:						
1st quarter	2,260	1,400	1,040	11,500	9,400	2,180
2nd quarter	1,890	1,370	740	23,880	20,170	3,770
Sri Lanka						
1989:						
1st quarter		[3]—		1,100	1,010	110
2nd quarter		[3]—		2,160	2,000	160
3rd quarter		[3]—		2,710	2,520	210

Country	Settlement: Decided	Settlement: Granted[2]	Settlement: Refused initially	Temporary stay[1]: Decided	Temporary stay[1]: Granted[2]	Temporary stay[1]: Refused initially
4th quarter		[3]—		2,030	1,830	230
Year		[3]—		8,000	7,370	710
1990:						
1st quarter	310	300	10	1,480	1,260	220
2nd quarter	320	300	20	2,220	2,020	200

[1] Applications other than those for settlement.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Included under 'temporary stay'.

Prisons

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prison places will have access to night sanitation in each of the next five years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest available projections for the percentages of places which will have access to night sanitation are listed below:

	Percentage
31 March 1991	60
31 March 1992	68
31 March 1993	76
31 March 1994	82

The figures for March 1995 and beyond will depend on the resources made available in the future.

We are considering the scope for further acceleration of the programme.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prison hospital officers have a recognised nursing qualification.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 1 December 1990, about 17 per cent. were in possession of a recognised nursing qualification.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made to improve links between the prison medical service and the national health service.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Prime Minister's efficiency unit conducted recently a scrutiny of the prison medical service (PMS). Its report contains 83 detailed recommendations which, taken together, represent a radical agenda of proposed reform in how prison medical treatment is delivered. Central to the report is the recommendation that the PMS should cease to be a provider of medical treatment, and instead should purchase under contract from the NHS and elsewhere, to a greater extent than is presently the case, the various medical services required in prisons.

We welcome the prospect of developing closer links with the NHS, where practicable. To this end, we and the Department of Health are considering actively the feasibility and practicability of the scrutiny recommendations. This will take a little time as we shall need also to consult leaders of the medical profession and various other bodies.

Our immediate task is to draw up and submit to the efficiency unit by January a detailed action plan. This work is well in hand.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current rules governing prisoners' access to in-cell television; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The prison service's current policy is not to allow prisoners to have televisions in their cells. This policy is under review.

Agents Provocateurs

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the steps taken to reflect in the Metropolitan police general orders the guidelines set out by the Minister of State on the use of agents provocateurs, *Official Report*, 14 May 1984, columns 85-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: No. Instructions contained in the current edition of the Metropolitan police force instruction manual reflect the Home Office guidance to which the then Minister of State referred during the debate on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill on 14 May 1984. I am advised by the Metropolitan police that a senior police officer has been tasked with looking at all force instructions relating to police operations to detect possible offences of indency to assess whether clearer guidance is required.

Firearms

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will bring into effect the provisions of section 20 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I signed a commencement order on 19 December which will bring into force on 2 April 1991 section 20 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, insofar as it is not already in force. Section 20 is already in force for the purpose of making an order thereunder and accordingly on 19 December I also signed a Firearms (Removal to Northern Ireland) Order to come into effect on 2 April 1991.

Police Expenditure

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce his decisions on police capital expenditure for 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The provision for police capital expenditure will rise from £173·7 million in the current year to £219 million in 1991-92. This is an increase of more than 25 per cent. Most of the increase will be to improve spending on vehicles and equipment.

Capital grant to meet 51 per cent. of this expenditure will be allocated to individual police authorities to meet the costs of major building schemes which are already in progress or are due to start in 1991-92. Police authorities will also receive grant on the basis of over £1,000 per head of force establishment for expenditure on minor building works, vehicles and equipment.

The amount which police authorities may borrow to meet their 49 per cent. share of capital expenditure will also be increased from £41 million in 1990-91 to £67 million in 1991-92. This is an increase of 63 per cent. and will enable police authorities to meet more than half of their costs from loans.

Police authorities are being informed of their allocations of grant and credit approvals for 1991-92.

Police Establishments

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will announce his decision on increases in police establishments for 1991-92.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am able to approve 700 additional police posts for 1991-92 in the allocation as shown in the following table. The 100 posts for the Metropolitan police will be with effect from 31 March 1992 while the provincial force posts will be with effect from 1 October 1991. In addition I can approve up to 90 posts where I am satisfied that the full cost would be reimbursed by a third party, as in the case of some airports.

Applications from the police authorities for increases in establishments have exceeded the number of posts available for allocation and I have therefore had to set priorities taking into account advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. My approval is always subject to confirmation from the police authorities that their share of the funding is available for the extra police posts.

Over 80 per cent. of the posts will be deployed on operational duties identified by chief constables, mainly at constable level.

I have also retained 36 posts for allocation to the regional crime squads. I await the advice of Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary before I decide on their specific allocation.

In addition to police posts, provision had been made for 1,100 additional civilian staff posts which it is intended should help forces obtain police officers through civilianisation. Provincial police authorities identified scope in their applications for 1991-92 for the release of up to 630 additional police officers to operational duties by civilianisation. In addition the Metropolitan Police plans to increase operational strength by 100 through civilianisation. The full effect of the additional posts and of civilianisation could therefore be to increase operational strength by over 1,400 in 1991-92.

	Posts
Avon and Somerset	4
Bedfordshire	32
Cambridgeshire	16
Cheshire	11
Cumbria	8
Derbyshire	8
Devon and Cornwall	15
Dorset	15
Durham	11
Essex	17
Gloucestershire	19
Greater Manchester	22
Hampshire	27
Hertfordshire	11
Humberside	18
Kent	28
Lancashire	22
Leicestershire	13
Lincolnshire	8
Merseyside	5
Norfolk	12
Northamptonshire	19
Northumbria	26
North Yorkshire	6
South Yorkshire	18
Staffordshire	8
Suffolk	11
Surrey	11
Sussex	18
Thames Valley	40
Warwickshire	8
West Midlands	48
West Yorkshire	14
Wiltshire	15
Total: (England and Wales	564
Metropolitan police	100
Regional crime squad	36
Total	700

Mr. Mostafa Rahimi

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the circumstances of refusal of entry to Mr. Mostafa Rahimi at Heathrow airport on 6 December;

(2) if he will make a statement on the circumstances surrounding the detention of Mr. Mostafa Rahimi in Singapore after 6 December and the discussions there have been with the Government of Singapore in respect of this case;

(3) what agreements were reached with *(a)* Quantas and *(b)* the Australian high commission immigration office prior to the placing of Mr. Mostafa Rahimi on flight QF010 on 6 December; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what representations he has *(a)* received from and *(b)* made to the Australian Government concerning the case of Mr. Mostafa Rahimi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 December 1990]:* Mr. Rahimi arrived on 6 December in transit from Australia whence he was being deported to Iran by the Australian authorities, and sought asylum. The case had been the subject of an approach from the Australian immigration service. We understood from them that deportation via London was the only practicable route in the circumstances. On Mr. Rahimi's arrival in London his application for asylum was not therefore considered by the asylum division since he could be returned to Australia as a safe third country in accordance with the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 25 July 1990—a policy understood and accepted by the Australian authorities before agreement to route Mr. Rahimi through London was given. He was refused entry on 5 December under the immigration rules, and directions were give to Qantas

Airways Ltd. to return him to Melbourne. A Qantas representative gave written and oral undertakings to the immigration officer at terminal 3 that Mr. Rahimi would be removed to Australia in accordance with the directions given under the Immigration Act. An officer of the Australian High Commission in London was aware of this arrangement. When, however, the aircraft returning Mr. Rahimi to Australia arrived in Singapore I understand that he was removed from the aircraft on the direction of an official of the Australian High Commission there and subsequently removed to Iran.

We have had no discussions with the Government of Singapore. The immigration service was informed of events in Singapore by a Qantas representative and immediately informed Mr. Rahimi's solicitors. The chief inspector of the immigration service wrote to the Australian authorities seeking urgent clarification. A reply from the Australian Government has been received which states that Mr. Rahimi was removed to Iran because his application for asylum in Australia had already been fully considered and rejected.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Burslem Post Office

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations and communications he has received from the Staffordshire *Evening Sentinel* between 26 November and 9 December in respect of Burslem post office.

Mr. Leigh: My noble Friend the Minister for Industry has received a letter from the Editor of the Staffordshire *Evening Sentinel* dated 26 November setting out his objections to the proposed regrading of Burslem Crown post office and has since received several editions of the Staffordshire *Evening Sentinel*.

Motor Vehicle Imports

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total percentage of import penetration in the motor vehicle industry in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Leigh: Import penetration in the motor vehicles industry (SIC 351) was 48 per cent. in 1979, and 51 per cent. in the 12 months to March 1989 (the latest available period).

Motor Vehicle Production

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of all goods vehicles was produced by wholly home-owned British companies in 1979, and in the latest available year.

Mr. Leigh: The proportion, in terms of number of vehicles produced in 1989, was 3 per cent. Figures for 1979 are not available.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total annual production of heavy and light goods vehicles in Britain in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Leigh: The information is contained in the table:

United Kingdom production of goods vehicles

	Light	*Heavy*	*Total*
1979	265,734	116,795	382,529
1989	279,822	44,597	324,419

Notes:

1. Light goods vehicles are those not exceeding 3·5 tons.
2. Buses and coaches are generally excluded. However, minibuses are included in light goods vehicles in 1989.
3. Figures are as published in aggregate form by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, from data collected by the Business Statistics Office.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total production of motor cars at factories with their headquarters in the United Kingdom in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Leigh: A total of 509,000 cars in 1979, and 473,000 cars in 1989. The totals exclude United Kingdom production by manufacturers whose parent companies are based outside the United Kingdom.

Hosiery and Knitwear Imports

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total percentage of import penetration in the hosiery and knitwear industry in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Leigh: Import penetration for the hosiery and knitwear industry (SIC 4360) was 25 per cent. in 1979, and 43 per cent. for the 12 months ending March 1989 (the latest available period).

Footwear Imports

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total production of footwear in Britain in 1979 and at the latest available date; and what was the total import penetration at the same dates.

Mr. Leigh: Total production, in terms of gross output for the footwear industry (SIC 4510) was £916 million in 1979, and £1,354 million in 1988 (latest available period). Import penetration for the same periods was 34 per cent. in 1979, and 48 per cent. in 1988.

Lynx Helicopters

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Lynx to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Leigh: The Department received such an application earlier this year, and I am pleased to say that approval was subsequently given.

Airbus

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much the Government have provided in launch aid to British Aerospace to enable it to participate in the Airbus projects.

Mr. Leigh: The sum of £50 million was made available to British Aerospace on the occasion of its entry into Airbus Industrie as a full partner in Airbus programmes in 1979. Launch aid of £249·3 million was paid in connection with the design and development of the Airbus A320.

Launch aid of up to £450 million is being paid in connection with the design and development of the Airbus A330 and A340.

Machine Tools Technology Association (Meeting)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list by rank and department all officials present at the meeting between the then Trade and Industry Minister, now Minister of Defence Procurement, and the Machine Tools Technology Association in early 1988.

Mr. Lilley: There were two officials with the rank of grade 7 and the Minister's assistant private secretary, all from my Department, at the meeting.

Privatisations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the privatisations with which his Department has been involved since 1979, indicating in each case the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* The information requested is given in the table.

Privatisations and sales of major subsidiaries since 1979

Company	*Date of Sale*	*Per cent.*	*Net Proceeds to Government* (£ million)	*Per cent.*	*Current Capitalisation*[1] (£ million)	*Per cent.*
British Aerospace	1981	52	43	52	—	—
(Secondary sale by HM Treasury)	1985	—	347·2	—	1,427·1	[2]—
Cable and Wireless	1981	49	181	49	—	—
(Secondary sales by	1983	22·3	263	22·3	—	—
HM Treasury)	1985	—	576·6	—	5·114·6	—
Jaguar	1984	—	[3]—	—	[4]—	—
British Telecom	1984	50·2	3,685	50·2	8,909·2	50·2
					17,747·5	Total
Rolls-Royce	1987	—	1,030·5	—	1,556·8	—
Rover Group[5]	1988	—	150	[6]—	[7]—	—
British Steel	1988	—	2,424·8	—	2,430·0	—
Girobank	1990	—	[8]—	—	[9]—	—

Notes:
[1]At close on Friday 7 December 1990.
[2]Includes Royal Ordnance and most of Rover Group.
[3]Proceeds to BL plc (now Rover Group).
[4]Now a wholly owned subsidiary of Ford.
[5]Private sector company.
[6]This does not take into account exchequer payments (including cash injection of £547 million) or exchequer cost of deferring payments of consideration.
[7]Now owned by British Aerospace and Honda.
[8]Proceeds to the Post Office.
[9]Now owned by Alliance and Leicester Building Society.

Science Parks

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much of the available EC money for the development of science parks has been taken up by appropriate bodies in Britain.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* No specific funds are available for the development of science parks under the European Community framework programme for research and development.

For the availability of funds for science parks in eligible areas under the European Community structural funds, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science on 14 December, *Official Report*, column *514*, by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment on 14 December, *Official Report*, column *535*, and by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on 17 December, *Official Report*, column *25*.

Manufactures

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1970, in index form based on 1985, the share of world trade in manufactures from the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the United States of America and Japan.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* The information is as follows:

Share of MMC's[1] *exports of manufactures*[2] *unit share indices (1985 = 100)*

Year	*United Kingdom*	*France*	*FRG*	*USA*	*Japan*
1970	134·2	103·5	106·4	111·4	59·4
1971	136·7	104·7	107·5	102·4	66·0
1972	125·3	109·4	108·6	97·0	67·0
1973	115·2	112·9	118·2	96·4	64·5
1974	107·6	108·2	116·0	102·4	72·6
1975	115·2	120·0	108·6	106·0	69·0
1976	107·6	115·3	110·2	103·6	74·6
1977	113·9	116·5	111·2	94·6	78·7
1978	112·7	115·3	111·2	91·6	79·7
1979	115·2	123·5	111·8	95·8	69·5
1980	122·8	117·6	106·4	101·8	75·6
1981	107·6	108·2	98·4	111·4	90·9
1982	106·3	105·9	105·3	105·4	87·8
1983	100·0	104·7	101·6	101·2	93·9
1984	96·2	100·0	96·8	103·0	102·0
1985	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0	100·0
1986	96·2	103·5	110·7	83·8	98·5
1987	102·5	105·9	114·4	82·0	91·9
1988	105·1	107·1	110·2	89·2	91·9
1989	103·8	105·9	109·1	94·6	89·3

Year	United Kingdom	France	FRG	USA	Japan
Percentage share of MMC's exports of Manufactures					
1985	7·9	8·5	18·7	16·7	19·7

[1] Main manufacturing countries—Belgium, Luxembourg, Canada, France, FR Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America.
[2] Standard International Trade Classification, sections 5-8.
Source: National sources.

Levitt Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action his Department is now taking in respect of the Levitt Group.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* The serious fraud office is investigating the "Levitt Group". My Department does not comment on the affairs of individual companies.

HEALTH

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the size of the hospital waiting lists in the Mid-Surrey and East Surrey area health authorities in 1980, 1985 and 1990 or latest available date.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table. While numbers on the lists have gone up since 1980, the number of patients treated has also increased. This information is also provided in the table.

	1980	1985	1989-90
Mid-Surrey			
Numbers on waiting list	1,905	2,153	2,031
Numbers treated	17,780	17,977	21,195
East Surrey			
Numbers on waiting list	1,293	1,448	2,688
Numbers treated	19,021	22,471	25,013

Factor VIII

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will consider increasing HIV-AIDS funding to regional health authorities to cover the cost of high-purity factor VIII for haemophiliacs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to increase HIV-AIDS funding to the regional health authorities to take account of the prescribing of high purity factor VIII for haemophiliacs.

The haemophilia treatment centres are funded by the appropriate health authority for the treatment of haemophiliacs and high purity factor VIII is one type of treatment which clinicians may prescribe.

Residential Homes

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will seek to introduce the same weekly payments to residents in county councils' residential homes as are currently paid to elderly residents' private residential homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As explained in our White Paper, "Caring for People", the Government wish to ensure that local authorities consider making use of the independent sector when placing people in residential settings under their community care responsibilities from April 1993.

We do not therefore propose to change the arrangements for paying social security benefits to people in local authority homes apart from personal allowances, which are to be awarded at the same rate to all residents supported from public funds in all homes, local authority, voluntary and private.

World AIDS Day

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department took to mark World AIDS Day; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: World AIDS Day, a World Health Organisation initiative, is an annual event designed to expand and strengthen the effort to prevent AIDS. The theme for this year's event was "Women and AIDS" and reflected how AIDS affects women, not only those infected with HIV, but those in society as carers, health educators and mothers.

This Department asked Margaret Jay of the National AIDS Trust (NAT) to form a group to steer the United Kingdom response, the group had representatives from the United Kingdom statutory, voluntary and media sectors. The day was marked by many events up and down the country, organised by local statutory bodies and voluntary groups. We were encouraged by the response from private firms.

On the eve of World AIDS Day, the Chief Medical Officer and I attended an ecumenical service of hope at Westminster Abbey; this was an impressive collaborative effort and a most moving tribute to those who have died as a result of AIDS and a sign of hope for the future.

On World AIDS Day Saturday 1 December we were able to talk to people in the forefront of the fight against AIDS, and speak to those caring for people with HIV infection and AIDS, and patients. We visited the Institute of Child Health and the Royal Free hospital, and the Chief Medical Officer went on to visit Mildmay Mission hospital and London Lighthouse.

We were also able, through the media, to assure people of this Government's continuing commitment to do all in our power to prevent the future spread of HIV.

Children Act

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional facilities will be provided for local authorities to ensure that the provisions of the Children Act and, in particular, those relating to guardians ad litem and childminder registration and inspection are implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Children Act will be implemented as a whole on 14 October 1991.

The cost of implementing the Act has been taken into account in the overall local authority settlement announced earlier this year. The personal social services standard spending figure for 1991-92 has been set at £4,502 million, an increase of 23·4 per cent. in cash terms over the equivalent figure for 1990-91, and some 10 per cent. higher than the local authority PSS budgets for 1990-91.

The first phase of the consultation exercise on the guidance and regulations required under the Act ended

recently. The consultation papers issued as part of this exercise will form the basis of a series of booklets of guidance which will be issued free of charge to all social services departments early next year.

A number of training projects have been commissioned by the Department; included among these is a project by the National Children's Bureau, who are producing training material for staff concerned with the registration and inspection of day care facilities. We expect to commission further projects next year, including material specifically aimed at guardians ad litem.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he has given to health authorities in London concerning their contractual arrangements for non-emergency ambulance services after 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: General advice on contracting arrangements was issued to all health authorities in March 1990 in the publication "Contracts for Health Services: Operating Contracts" a copy of which is available in the Library. Paragraphs 4.28 and 4.29 of the publications relate to ambulance services.

Doctors

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of male doctors and the number of female doctors *(a)* in general practice, *(b)* who are consultants and *(c)* other than consultants who work in hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of general medical practitioners hospital consultants and other hospital doctors 30 September 1990 England

Grade	*Male*	*Female*
Unrestricted principals (GPs)	19,778	5,830
Hospital consultants	12,619	2,261
Staff grade	25	8
Associated specialists	475	321
Senior registrars	2,373	916
Registrar	4,617	1,436
Senior house officers	6,802	3,823
House officers	1,682	1,262
Other staff	15	5
Hospital practitioners	762	69
Clinical assistants	5,300	2,249
Total other doctors	22,051	10,089

Food Poisoning

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give figures for the incidence of food poisoning in each local authority area in each of the last four years.

Mr. Dorrell: The information available centrally by regional health authority area was placed in the Library on 26 July 1990 following an answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) at column *438*.

Erythropoietin

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the estimated number of patients who would benefit from erythropoietin.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received a number of representations concerning erythropoietin.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, pursuant to his reply of 26 November, *Official Report*, column 296, he has received or intends to acquire, information from regional health authorities on the extent to which the extra funds provided by his Department for 1991-92 will meet the needs of all patients who fulfil his Department's criteria for benefiting from erythropoietin.

Mr. Dorrell: No. We previously discussed with regional health authorities their plans for the funding of erythropoietin. Their strategies varied but all were aware of its benefits and the need for its progressive introduction.

Opinion Surveys

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer of 17 December to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, if he will place the surveys listed in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not normal practice to do so. I regret that the tables supplied with my earlier reply included some social security surveys not relevant to health and personal social services. The corrected tables follow.

Department of Health

- Misuse of Drugs Campaign 1988-89 Creative Development Stage 2
- Nursing Recruitment Campaign—Telephone Response Follow-up
- Cold Weather Campaign Evaluation 1988-89
- Misuse of Drugs 1988-89: Creative Development Stage 3
- NHS Financial Management Training Scheme Research
- Nursing: Youth Concept Research
- Drugs 1988-89 Campaign Evaluation Stage 7
- Nursing Tracking 1989-90: Two Stages June and September
- Cold Weather Publicity Campaign 1989-90 Evaluation
- Nursing Tracking Study Wave III and Wave IV (1990)
- Drugs Tracking Study Stage 8
- Drugs 1990: Doublehead Research
- Organ Donation: Regional Research
- Nursing Qualitative Evaluation
- Cold Weather Postal Follow-up Research
- Drugs 1990: Qualitative Evaluation
- Nursing Follow-up of Campaign Response: Student Nurses
- Drugs Tracking Stage 9

Department of Health and Social Security

- Nursing Recruitment Campaign Evaluation
- Image of the NHS
- Anti-Heroin Campaign Tracking
- AIDS-Drugs Advertising Development Research
- AIDS Longterm Tracking
- Organ Donor Next of Kin—Qualitative Research
- Aids Youth Campaign Tracking Research (November 1986 and February 1987)
- AIDS/Drugs Doublehead Animatics Research—Reaction to Advertising Roughs
- AIDS-Drugs Advertising: Animatic/Doublehead Communication Check
- Attitudes to Nurse Training
- Stage 6 of a Tracking Survey to Evaluate the Anti-Drugs Campaigns

Attitudes of West Indians and Asians to AIDS
Nursing Recruitment—Advertising Communication Check
1986-87 Anti-Herion Campaign Creative Development
Anti-Heroin Campaign Evaluation Stage 4
Qualitative Research into Attitudes to Condoms (AIDS)
AIDS Anti-Body Test Leaflet Comm Check Research Pilot and Main Survey
National and Regional Publicity Needs for the Blood Transfusion Service
AIDS-Drugs Campaigns: Qualitative Evaluation Research
Prescribing Publicity
Organ Donor Research
Misuse of Drugs 1988-89 Campaign: Advertising Development Research
1988 Nursing Recruitment Campaign: Initial Evaluation Research
Nursing Careers: 1988 Tracking Study
Attitudes to Giving Blood
Smoking Among Secondary Schoolchildren in 1986 (DHSS/WO SHHD)

Disabled People

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when he last issued guidance to social service authorities under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948, to make arrangements to make registers of people requiring assistance on account of disability etc.;

(2) if he will publish the present guidance to social service authorities under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948; and if he intends to revise this guidance.

Mr. Dorrell: The last guidance to local authorities on registration practice was issued in 1974 in local authority circular 17/74 a copy of which will be placed in the Library. This document has been copied to health authorities for information and wider publication is not considered necessary. We have no current plans to revise this guidance.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers of people registered under the provisions of the National Assistance Act 1948, for the social services authorities in *(a)* Calderdale, *(b)* Bradford, *(c)* Wakefield, *(d)* Kirklees, *(e)* Leeds, *(f)* Rochdale and *(g)* Oldham.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is published in the following triennial publications, copies of which are held in the Library:

Registers of physically disabled persons (General Classes) at 31 March 1987, England, (Ref. A/F 87/19)
Registers of blind and partially sighted persons at 31 March 1988, England, (Ref. A/F 88/7)
Registers of the deaf and hard of hearing at 31 March 1989, England, (Ref. A F 89 20)

Medical Negligence

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement providing the details of the changes which come into force on 1 January 1991 affecting the claims made against health authorities for medical negligence.

Mr. Dorrell: With effect from 1 January 1990, health authorities assumed direct responsibility, previously taken by the medical defence organisations, for claims of negligence against their medical and dental staff in the course of their national health service employment. A copy of HC(89)34, "Claims of medical negligence against NHS hospital and community doctors and dentists", has been placed in the Library. No changes come into force on 1 January 1991.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the total number of claims for medical negligence met by each region and district of the NHS in each of last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what was the total number of claims for medical negligence lodged against each region and district of the NHS in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(3) what has been the total amount of claims for medical negligence met by each region and district of the NHS in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: Until 31 December 1989, the medical defence organisations paid the costs and damages arising from claims of negligence against the medical and dental staff of health authorities. Information on the number of claims and on the costs involved is not held centrally.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning the extent to which funds are currently being diverted by health authorities from patient care towards provision for possible future claims for medical negligence.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no information which suggests that funds are being diverted in this way.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will make a statement giving details of his estimates of the likely cost of settling those claims made against the NHS for medical negligence in England and Wales which are currently being dealt with;

(2) what financial assistance he intends to give to the NHS trust hospitals to enable them to meet the potential £500 million outstanding liability for medical negligence suits.

Mr. Dorrell: The medical defence organisations paid out an estimated £40 million in the hospital and community health services in the United Kingdom in 1989. The costs in 1990-91 may be higher than this. National health service trusts will not be responsible for any act of medical negligence occurring before they were established.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions he has had with representatives of those units within the NHS which have opted for trust status about the implications for future funding of outstanding claims for medical negligence;

(2) if he will make a statement providing the details of the changes which may come into force on 1 April 1991 affecting the way in which claims made against health authorities for medical negligence will be dealt with in those cases where the health authority, or part of the health authority, has been awarded trust status.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities will remain responsible after 1 April 1991 for claims of medical negligence made against them before that date. National health service trusts will be responsible only where the negligence or alleged negligence took place after the trust became responsible for the service concerned. A copy of EL(90)195 "Insurance arrangements from April 1991" has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received concerning future plans for dealing with claims for medical negligence in the NHS.

Mr. Dorrell: The few representations received recently included one from the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts and one from Hastings health authority.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement giving details of his estimates of the likely cost of settling all currently outstanding claims and potential claims for medical negligence in the NHS.

Mr. Dorrell: No estimate has been made centrally of the likely cost of settling all currently outstanding claims: no estimate can be made of potential claims. The contingent liability is substantially larger than the amount paid out in any one year, since medical negligence cases often take several years to be settled.

Midwives

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will reconsider the recommendations of the Social Services Committee in its fourth report, 1988-89, on midwives regrading.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government gave very careful consideration to the recommendations of the Select Committee and its response was published last year (Cm. 721—June 1989).

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the Institute of Manpower Studies survey entitled "Midwives Carers and Grading", printed in November.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This study was commissioned by the Royal College of Midwives, which has not sought comments from the Department.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the clinical grading structure has been applied to midwifery posts in a fair and consistent manner;

(2) what differences there are in the application of the clinical grading structure to staff midwife posts between the four Thames regions and the other regions in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The grading of individual posts is a matter for the employing authorities, who are expected to adhere to the agreed clinical grading definitions. These require posts to be graded in accordance with the particular duties and responsibilities they carry. Variations between authorities in the proportion of posts graded at particular levels may arise, for example, because of different approaches to service organisations.

Guideposts Trust

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will provide resources to the Guideposts Trust.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has received no application for a grant from the trust.

Community Nursing

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has issued any advice to health authorities on the organisation of community nursing services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: On 10 December I launched the report "Nursing in the Community" at a conference of senior national health service and local authority managers. This report provides practical guidance on the organisation and development of nursing services in the community. It will place nursing services in the community high on health authority management agendas, where they belong. Copies of the report have been sent to regional, district, FHSA and unit general managers, all GP practices, directors of social services, community health councils, the royal colleges and professional organisations. Copies are available in the Library.

Food Safety

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the names of those invited to serve on the advisory committee and the steering group on the microbiological safety of food.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and I have decided that the following should be invited to be members of the advisory committee and the steering group on the microbiological safety of food.

Advisory committee

Professor Heather Dick *Chairman*
Professor of Medical Microbiology
University of Dundee
Dr. R. Gilbert
Director of Food Hygiene Laboratory
Public Health Laboratory Service
Dr. T. Wilson
Senior Consultant Bacteriologist
Belfast City Hospital Laboratory
Dr. N. A. Simmons
Department of Clinical Bacteriology
Guys Hospital
Dr. S. Palmer
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre
Welsh Unit, Cardiff Royal Infirmary
Professor R. Feldman
Professor of Clinical Epidemiology
London Hospital
Professor D. Georgala
Director
Institute of Food Research
Dr. P. A. Mullen
Veterinary Advisor to
Union International Ltd.
Mr. R. Southgate
Technical Director
Northern Foods Meat Group
Mr. G. Amery
Group General Manager
Technical Group, CWS Ltd.
Dr. G. Spriegel
Director of Scientific Services
Sainsburys
Mr. R. Ackerman
Chairman of
Hotel and Catering Training Company
Dr. M. Stringer
Head of Microbiology
Campden Food and Drink Research Association
Mr. R. Sprenger
Director of Environmental Health
Doncaster

Dr. C. St. J. Buxton
Director of Public Health
Durham Health Authority
Dame Rachel Waterhouse
Consumers' Association
Mrs. B. Saunders
Freelance Consultant

Steering Group
Dr. Mary Cooke
Deputy Director
Public Health Laboratory Service
Dr. C. Bartlett
Director
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre
Professor Arbuthnott
Professor of Microbiology
University of Nottingham
Mr. E. Ramsden
Chief Environmental Health Officer
Swansea
Professor I. M. Smith
Professor of Microbiology
Royal Veterinary College
Dr. T. Roberts
Institute of Food Research
Dr. A. Baird-Parker
Unilever Research
Mr. D. Elliott
Senior Production Executive
Marks and Spencers
Mr. M. Vestringhe
Chairman of Catering and Allied

In addition, the group will comprise members from health and agriculture departments.

The advisory committee and the steering group will be holding their first meetings shortly.

The Gulf

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers and categories of NHS staff who are being called up for military service in the Gulf; and what assessment he has made of the consequences of this call-up on the finances of the NHS, and on the quality of service and waiting lists at hospitals.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The results are not yet known of the renewed call for volunteers made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Until it is known who has volunteered or been called out, and from where, it is not possible to make any meaningful assessment of the consequences for the national health service.

Incontinence

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many elderly people in Leicestershire are estimated to be in need of incontinence aids; how many such people are accommodated in residential nursing homes in *(a)* the public and *(b)* the private or voluntary sector; and how many and what percentage of such persons in each sector receive such incontinence pads free of charge.

Mr. Dorrell: Information about the demand for and supply of incontinence pads is not held centrally. However, the consultation document produced by Leicestershire health authority indicates that between 400 and 500 people living in private/voluntary residential care homes may be affected by the withdrawal of free incontinence aids by the district. The district health authority have taken measures to reduce the effect on these individuals by continuing to assess the needs of individual residents and the health authority will continue to advise home owners and provide supplies at a cost price.

Mental Illness

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has concerning recent developments in the services for mentally ill in Exeter.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I visited Exeter on 23 November to open the new Cedars Health unit, a £2 million, 42-bed mental health unit.

This is one of a number of recent developments in services for the mentally ill in Exeter. These include an 18-bed child and adolescent psychiatric unit; 10 units with a total of 150 beds, for confused elderly people; and 11 hostels and sheltered housing developments with a total of 85 places in conjunction with the voluntary sector.

Eye Treatment

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether South Sefton district health authority has complied with his Department's guidelines on consultation procedures in respect of the proposed transfer of eye services to the Walton and Fazackerley hospitals;

(2) how many beds will be provided for children at the Royal Liverpool Hospital for Specialist Eye Treatments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The future of eye services in Liverpool and South Sefton, including services for children, is currently the subject of consultation by the Liverpool health authority. This is in accordance with laid down procedure. The hon. Member may wish to contact the health authority chairmen concerned for details.

HIV Tests

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with insurance companies about arrangements for counselling before a test for HIV is undertaken at a company's request.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 19 December at column *243*.

Therapy Officers

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has received the report of the review of the functions of his Department's therapy officer posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have now received and considered the report and arranged for copies to be placed in the library. Mr. John Cashman has earned our gratitude for the fair and thorough way in which he has carried out his task. The Department will be giving the departmental staff side the opportunity to comment on the recommendations and on the action proposed.

At the outset, the report commends the present holders of therapy posts in the Department for their commitment, dedication, wide ranging experience and professionalism. We are happy to endorse those comments.

The report's main recommendation is that the department should continue to have an establishment of full-time therapy officers. This should comprise one full-time post each for physiotherapy, occupational

therapy and speech therapy. We accept this recommendation. Future appointments to these three posts will be made for periods of five years and the need for the posts will be kept under review.

The report acknowledges that the department may require additional advice on therapy services which could be met through consultancy contracts or short-term secondments related to specific projects. The case for buying in services in this way will be considered on an annual basis.

A number of other recommendations are aimed at bringing the therapy officers more closely within the mainstream of the Department's management and budgetary arrangements. These will be put into effect as soon as practicable.

Drugs Bill

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of the drugs bill in 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Our latest forecast of the cost of drugs prescribed by general practitioners in 1990-91 is some £200 million less than provided in the Estimates. This is forecast to give 1 per cent. growth in real terms over 1989-90, compared with an average of 4 per cent. a year in the five years from 1985-86 to 1989-90, and reflects the effectiveness of the prescribing analysis and cost (PACT) initiative in influencing prescribing by GPs. The forecast drugs bill for 1991-92 in our public expenditure plans is £2,310 millions, an increase of 3 per cent. in real terms over the forecast outturn for this year.

Nurse Training

Mr. Lee: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the joint working group on nurse training and the independent care sector will publish its report.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1987 the then Chief Executive of the National Health Service Management Board and the Chief Nursing Officer of the Department of Health met with senior representatives of the independent health care sector to review the sector's contribution to nurse training. It was agreed that a joint working group should be established in order to identify the extent of the independent sector's capacity to increase its contribution to nurse training.

I have today arranged for copies of the group's report, "Training to Care" to be placed in the Library. The principal achievement is a clear commitment from private sector major providers and organisations representing the independent health care sector to increase their overall contribution to nurse training. This encouraging first step will be followed-up by discussion between representatives of the independent sector and the NHS management executive to explore ways of putting that commitment into practice.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 14 January 1991.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Shipbuilding

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the amount of merchant ship tonnage in British yards *(a)* under construction and *(b)* already ordered, in 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Leigh: The information is as follows:

	Under construction	*thousand gross tonnes already ordered*
1979	508	264
[1]1990	275	387

[1]End of 3rd quarter.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

NATO Central Supplies Agency

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department's arrangements for housing the NATO central supplies agency have been completed; and what is the estimated cost of setting up, activating and operating the United Kingdom base for the central supplies agency.

Mr. Leigh: A site has been identified for the location of the eastern branch of the NATO Central Supplies Agency. this site is presently occupied by a civilian organisation which will give it up on short notice if it is required to house the CSA during crisis or war. Until the site is required to house the CSA, the peacetime occupier will bear the rental and maintenance costs. It is not possible to say at this time what the costs of setting up and operating the agency in crisis or war might be. The cost of operating the agency in such cirmcumstances would fall to NATO.

Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will order an investigation into whether the practices of large bookmaking companies include the rigging or fixing of odds on United Kingdom racecourses and tracks.

Mr. Redwood: The practice of "laying-off" of bets is not illegal under the gaming legislation. During its investigation of the Grand Metropolitan/William Hill merger in 1989, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission looked at the practice in this context. They found that there was little evidence that the bookmakers had acted other than defensively in laying-off bets, in order that the odds should reflect the weight of money placed off-course. It therefore concluded that the merger did not operate against the public interest. In the light of the Channel 4 programme "Dispatches" shown on 12 December, the Office of Fair Trading is considering whether any new issues are raised which warrant further action.

Export Manual

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the most recent date on which his Department's export licence unit manual of instructions was revised, in particular in respect of the export of strategic materials and weaponry.

Mr. Lilley: The manual is amended on a continuous basis in the light of changing circumstances.

Scotch Whisky

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government about the tax discrimination made by the Chilean Government against Scotch whisky.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Government are continuing to press for elimination of the tax discrimination against exports of Scotch whisky to Chile both on its bilateral contacts with the Chilean authorities and through the Commission of the European Communities.

Departmental Annual Report

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will take steps to expedite the publication of his Department's annual report under section 729 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Redwood: The most recent report was published on 7 November 1990. The publication date is determined mainly by the time needed to compile the comprehensive statistical information contained in the report. It is always published as soon as possible after the material is available.

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy relating to accountancy firm mergers.

Mr. Redwood: The Government's policy on mergers in the accountancy profession is the same as for any other mergers. Each case is considered on its individual merits.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether any of Britain's top 300 companies are audited by firms criticised by his Department's inspectors.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 26 October 1990 *Official Report*, column *330*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will propose legislation under which company auditors would be banned from recruiting directors of their client companies.

Mr. Redwood: I see no reason to do so. Ethical guidance issued by the professional accountancy bodies states that no one should take part in the audit of a company if he has, during the period on which the report is to be made or at any time in the two years prior to the first day of that period, been an officer, other than auditor,

or employee of that company. Under part II of the Companies Act 1989, recognised supervisory bodies are required to have adequate rules and practices as to professional integrity and independence.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will propose legislation under which shareholders would be given a copy of the auditors' letter of weakness.

Mr. Redwood: No. The value of a letter of weakness stems from the fact that it is a confidential communication from the auditors to the management of a company. It must be for management, in consultation with the auditors, to decide which third parties, if any, need to be aware of its contents.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the accountants criticised in the Euroflame report are still permitted to carry out company audits.

Mr. Redwood: Yes.

Trading Standards Prosecutions

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many trading standards prosecutions were brought in 1990 by each local authority to whom such prosecutions are delegated, whether he is satisfied that similar standards of inspection and prosecution are being applied nationally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The table gives the numbers of prosecutions brought by local authority trading standards departments in Great Britain in the year 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990. This is the latest period for which such information is available. Each local weights and measures authority is responsible for enforcing trading standards legislation in its area. The local authority associations have set up the Local Authority Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards whose functions include co-ordinating operational practice.

Number of prosecutions under all consumer protection statutes brought by local authority trading standards departments 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990

Authority	*Number of prosecutions*		
	Summary	*Indictment*	*Total*
England			
County Councils			
Avon	95	1	96
Bedfordshire	78	0	78
Berkshire	63	3	66
Buckinghamshire	72	0	72
Cambridgeshire	141	0	141
Cheshire	168	9	177
Cleveland	75	0	75
Cornwall	49	2	51
Cumbria	34	0	34
Derbyshire	142	0	142
Devon	889	1	890
Dorset	58	0	58
Durham	63	0	63
East Sussex	38	2	40
Essex	320	4	324
Hampshire	167	4	171
Hereford and Worcester	76	0	76
Hertfordshire	33	2	35
Humberside	302	12	314
Isle of Wight	3	0	3
Kent	531	12	543
Lancashire	231	9	240
Leicestershire	110	1	111
Lincolnshire	33	0	33
Norfolk	34	1	35
North Yorkshire	421	4	425
Northamptonshire	105	0	105
Northumberland	217	1	218
Nottinghamshire	134	1	135
Oxfordshire	144	0	144
Shropshire	251	27	278
Somerset	136	2	138
Staffordshire	39	1	40
Suffolk	13	0	13
Surrey	228	0	228
Warwickshire	137	9	146
West Sussex	85	1	86
Wiltshire	119	0	119
Metropolitan District Councils			
Barnsley	36	0	36
Birmingham	127	64	191
Bolton	29	1	30
Bury	0	0	0
Coventry	44	1	45
Doncaster	28	1	29
Dudley	33	0	33
Gateshead	15	0	15
Knowsley	37	1	38
Liverpool	77	0	77
Manchester	30	0	30
Newcastle	214	2	216
North Tyneside	42	1	43
Oldham	24	2	26
Rochdale	0	0	0
Rotherham	31	0	31
Salford	49	0	49
Sandwell	32	0	32
Sefton	41	0	41
Sheffield	61	0	61
Solihull	32	1	33
South Tyneside	25	0	25
St. Helens	49	2	51
Stockport	9	0	9
Sunderland	38	0	38
Tameside	10	0	10
Trafford	4	1	5
Walsall	97	2	99
West Yorkshire[1]	1,036	11	1,047
Wigan	7	0	7
Wirral	48	0	48
Wolverhampton	24	0	24
London Boroughs			
Barking and Dagenham	43	0	43
Barnet	39	0	39
Bexley	95	0	95
Brent, Ealing and Harrow	120	4	124
Bromley	34	2	36
Camden	4	0	4
Corporation of London	2	0	2
Croydon	84	20	104
Enfield	76	2	78
Greenwich	8	0	8
Hackney	16	0	16
Hammersmith and Fulham	14	0	14
Haringey	1	0	1
Havering	24	0	24
Hillingdon	15	0	15
Hounslow	20	0	20
Kensington and Chelsea	26	0	26
Kingston	21	4	25
Lambeth	24	0	24
Lewisham	3	0	3
Merton	6	0	6
Newham	7	0	7
Redbridge	29	0	29

Authority	Number of prosecutions		
	Summary	Indictment	Total
Richmond upon Thames	2	0	2
Southwark	29	0	29
Waltham Forest	44	1	45
Wandsworth	34	0	34
Westminster	41	9	50
Scotland			
Regional and Island Councils			
Borders	9	0	9
Central	64	3	67
Dumfries and Galloway	25	0	25
Fife	28	0	28
Grampian	22	0	22
Highland	1	0	1
Lothian	43	0	43
Orkney	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0
Strathclyde	67	6	73
Tayside	32	0	32
Western Isles	0	0	0
Wales			
County Councils			
Clwyd	143	5	148
Dyfed	43	1	44
Gwent	47	1	48
Gwynedd	22	0	22
Mid Glamorgan	126	2	128
Powys	30	0	30
South Glamorgan	27	0	27
West Glamorgan	18	0	18

Notes—Details of prosecutions for Gloucestershire County Council, and the London Boroughs of Islington, Sutton and Tower Hamlets were not available.

[1]*The West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service is provided by a joint Committee of the Metropolitan Districts of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield.*

Car Clocking

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals to reduce the danger of purchasers being defrauded by the practice of car clocking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: Clocking is a criminal offence under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968. Trading standards officers of local authorities have the appropriate powers to investigate cases and to prosecute offenders.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the precise purpose for which the machine tools to be exported by Matrix Churchill were to be used according to form C5 filled in by the exporter.

Mr. Lilley: I believe that the hon. Member is referring to information requested at C6 of the export licence application form. It had been the practice of successive Governments not to discuss information concerning individual export licences.

Levitt Group

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will list the services which his Department has purchased from the Levitt Group.

Mr. Redwood: I am aware of none.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will place a copy of the FIMBRA report on the Levitt Group in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: No. The report is a matter for FIMBRA.

Sequestration

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish the findings of the recent investigation into the operation of the scheme introduced by the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 whereby public funds are available for sequestration in Scotland; and what reform of the scheme is proposed.

Mr. Redwood: The policy evaluation is not yet complete.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for each year since inception, what was the number of sequestrations awarded under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 where the total debts have not exceeded £2,000.

Mr. Redwood: Comprehensive statistics are not available but the accountant in bankruptcy estimates, on the basis of a sampling exercise, that the percentage of sequestrations awarded annually where the total debts did not exceed £2,000 were as follows:

	per cent.
1986	2·9
1987	1·2
1988	2·8
1989	6·9

The figure for 1989 is based on the information available on the total debts when the sampling exercise was undertaken and is provisional.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in cases of voluntary sequestration or sequestration, pursuant to a trust deed under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, what monitoring is applied to identify the payer of the pre-sequestration expenses such as legal fees and out-lays in connection with the petition; and what steps are taken to establish whether these expenses are paid by the trustee subsequently appointed or by a partner of the trustee or anyone associated with the trustee.

Mr. Redwood: A trust deed is an entirely private arrangement between truster and trustee and is not subject to supervision by the court. There is no provision in the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 requiring or empowering the accountant in bankruptcy to identify the source of payment of pre-sequestration expenses.

The Gulf

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the countries with whom he has had discussions about their export of uranium enrichment centrifuge or military sensitive equipment to Iraq.

Mr. Lilley: No. The export of such goods would require an export licence. The established practice is not to publish information about export licence applications.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the Export Credits Guarantee Department's portfolio management system.

Mr. Lilley: In his answer of 18 December 1989 to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), my predecessor announced that the Government had decided that ECGD should continue to provide export credit and financing support for United Kingdom project exports, but that, in order to reduce the costs of such support, radical new methods for the management of ECGD's political risk portfolio would be introduced.

The Government continue to attach great importance to United Kingdom project and capital goods exports and to maintaining a viable and stable framework of ECGD support. However, the international debt crisis, and more recently the events in the Gulf, have shown the risks which are assumed by ECGD to be potentially very significant. Since the onset of the debt crisis ECGD has accumulated a deficit with the Exchequer of over £2·5 billion as a result of claims paid under its guarantees. This deficit has had to be financed by the taxpayer, and further substantial claims payments estimated at around £2·5 billion are expected over the next few years. It is important that future risks are underwritten on a prudent basis.

Against this background, the ECGD has now introduced a portfolio management system—PMS—for its underwriting of project and capital goods exports. The purpose of PMS is to provide a more disciplined and prudent framework for taking decisions about ECGD support for such exports. PMS will allow Ministers better to weigh the national interest reasons for giving such support against the risks to the ECGD and the taxpayer that premium income will not be able to cover underwriting losses.

With regard to PMS, the Government have now taken decisions on the availability of ECGD cover for a number of important overseas markets. It is not the ECGD's policy to disclose details of the amount of cover available for individual markets; exporters should contact the ECGD to ascertain the cover position in respect of contracts they are currently processing.

Under PMS, the ECGD will also be introducing a new premium rating system for its guarantees in respect of project exports. The Government intend to press in international fora for other export credit agencies to charge more economic premium rates for export credit support, but, in the meantime, ECGD will be adopting new premium rates which will be matched more closely to risk. This will mean that rates for higher risk markets will rise, but there will be some reductions in the better risk markets. The new premium system will be introduced in 1991-92. Export contracts which are concluded in 1990-91 will attract premium rates under the current system. The ECGD will announce details of the new system in due course.

Levitt Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list all the companies in the Levitt Group, the regulatory body each company is a member of and the date of the last accounts of each company filed at Companies House.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 18 December 1990]:* My information is as follows:

	Date of last accounts 1988
The Levitt Group (Holdings) plc	31 December
The Levitt Group Ltd.—member of FIMBRA	31 December
R. J. Levitt Pension Consultants Ltd.	31 December
R. J. Levitt Insurance Consultants Ltd.	31 December
Devonshire House Ltd.	31 December
Levitt & Co. Ltd.	31 December
Olympic Gold Financial Services Ltd.	31 December
The Levitt Group (Mortgage Services) Ltd.	31 December
The Levitt Group (Financial Services) Ltd.	31 December
The Mortgage Collection Ltd.	31 December
Devonshire General Insurance Consultants Ltd.	31 December
Deansway Developments Ltd.	31 December
Levitt Insurance Brokers Ltd.	31 December
Chambers & Newman Financial Services Ltd.	31 December
Chambers & Newman (European) Ltd.	31 December
Chambers, Newman & Walters Ltd.	31 December
Gyrobond Ltd.	31 December
Chambers & Newman (Holdings) Ltd.	31 December
Levitt Group (Nominees) Ltd.	31 December
Levitt Group (Leasing) Ltd.	31 December
Zohar Pictures Ltd.	31 December
Property Acumen plc	31 December
Knight, Ellis & Co. Ltd.	31 December
The Levitt Group (Commercial Finance) Ltd.	[1]—
Newforce Properties Ltd.	[1]—
Faith Corporation Ltd.	[2]—
Levitt Sports & Entertainment Ltd.	[2]—
The Levitt Group Investment Management Ltd.	[2]—
Levitt Securities Ltd.	[2]—
Christchurch Consultancy Management Services Ltd.	[2]—
Levitt Promotions Ltd.	[2]—
Levitt Financial Planning Ltd.	[2]—
Levitt Film, Finance & Insurance Services Ltd.	[2]—
CLP—Levitt Ltd.	[2]—
The Levitt Group (International Holdings) Ltd.	[2]—
Frank Maloney Promotions & Management Ltd.	[2]—
The Levitt Group Holdings Inc.	[3]—
The Levitt Group Inc.	[3]—
The Levitt Group Financial Services Inc.	[3]—
Levitt (Ingenierie Financiere) S. A.	[3]—

The Levitt Group Ltd. is a member of FIMBRA. Levitt Insurance Brokers Ltd. and Chambers & Newman Financial Services Ltd. are members of IBRC.

[1] No accounts filed since incorporation.

[2] Accounts not yet required.

[3] Companies not registered in the United Kingdom.

Environmental Management Practice

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions have taken place between his Department and the British Standards Institute over the development by the British Standards Institute of a new standard on environmental management practice in production industry.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 20 December 1990]:* My officials have had general discussions with a number of

organisations, including the British Standards Institute, about possible approaches to encouraging improved standards of environmental management by companies.

Cereal Exports

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice he will give Grain and Feed Trade Association members regarding the provision of credit facilities for United Kingdom cereal exports to non EC countries in the light of the recent Russian decision not to trade unless credit facilities are made available.

Mr. Curry: I have been asked to reply. In response to the credit needs of the Soviet Union, the European Council has agreed to introduce credit guarantees for Community exporters of food to that market. The details of the guarantees have yet to be worked out but they may be available to cereal exporters. For other non-EC markets, United Kingdom cereal exporters who need credit facilities may wish to seek them from banks or from the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

ERM

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will make a statement setting out the arrangements for a realignment of sterling within the ERM; and if this is a decision which the United Kingdom can make alone.

Mr. Maples: Adjustments to central rates between ERM member currencies are subject to mutual agreement by a common procedure which comprises all countries participating in the ERM. Any member state wishing to propose a realignment may do so. If necessary, a conference of finance Ministers, and Central Bank governors is held to consider any proposed realignment. The United Kingdom has no intention of seeking a realignment of sterling within the ERM.

ENERGY

National Power

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what representations he has had from the chairman of National Power regarding its future levels of capital investment and its preferred financing methods for that capital investment;

(2) what consultations he has had with the chairman of National Power regarding the proposed debt level to be injected into its balance sheet; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has had from the chairman of National Power regarding the expected level of profits to be declared for the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Consultations with the chairman of National Power are confidential.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the number of applications for each of the 12 regional electricity companies that were made on *(a)* employee forms and *(b)* pensioner priority forms.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The numbers of applications for shares in the 12 regional electricity companies made on *(a)* employee forms and *(b)* pensioner priority forms are as set out in the table. A number of employees were eligible for and applied under both the discount and priority offer and the free and matching offer.

	Number of applications on employee forms[1]	*Number of applications on pensioner forms*
Eastern Electricity	13,350	2,377
East Midlands Electricity	10,320	1,560
London Electricity	8,707	2,163
Manweb	7,173	1,180
Midlands Electricity	10,524	2,048
Northern Electricity	7,197	1,052
NORWEB	11,197	1,907
SEEBOARD	8,289	1,981
Southern Electric	10,873	2,287
South Wales Electricity	5,068	1,007
South Western Electricity	8,030	1,566
Yorkshire Electricity	9,748	1,743

[1] Provisional figures.

These figures exclude 10,639 applications from employees of NGC and EASL for collections of shares.

Sulphur Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to seek a further reduction in sulphur dioxide emissions during negotiations on the new European protocol.

Mr. Moynihan: The United Kingdom will play a positive part in the current discussions on the revision of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe protocol of sulphur dioxide emissions. All sources of sulphur dioxide emissions will be covered in the negotiations including those not already subject to separate ceilings. It is the Government's view that the new agreement should be based on the critical loads approach. It is too early to predict the outcome of these discussions.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Birmingham Pub Bombings

32. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects a date to be set for the appeal of the Birmingham Six; and if he will make a statement.

34. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects a date to be set for the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings.

36. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects a date to be set for the appeal of the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer to my earlier answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin).

Private Bailiffs

33. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received calling for the establishment of a complaints procedure against private bailiffs.

The Attorney-General: The National Consumer Council has recently published a report which recommends that the Lord Chancellor's Department should

advertise a central address and telephone number to receive complaints against private bailiffs. The Government are considering the recommendations of this report.

Racist and Anti-Semitic Literature

35. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the prosecution of persons sending racist and anti-Semitic literature through the post.

The Attorney-General: Such people may commit offences under part III of the Public Order Act 1986, or under the Malicious Communications Act 1988. I am aware of 16 separate police investigations arising out of the distribution of allegedly anti-Semitic material through the post.

CPS and Serious Fraud Office

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Attorney-General how many vacancies for professionally qualified staff exist currently in *(a)* the Crown prosecution service and *(b)* the Serious Fraud Office; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service currently has 366·5 vacancies for lawyers, within a total requirement for lawyers of 2,053. In the past 12 months the number of lawyers in post has increased from 1,580 to 1,686·5, an average net gain of 10·5 per month. There are no vacancies for lawyers or accountants in the Serious Fraud Office.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Vietnam

39. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will increase aid to Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government are providing financial support to British non-governmental organisations for projects in Vietnam. We have no immediate plans to begin a direct aid programme, but we are keeping this question under review.

Zaire Rain Forests

41. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much support has been given to preserving the rain forests of Zaire *(a)* in the last year, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* 10 years ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Our technical co-operation programme for Zaire is limited to training and assistance for English language teaching. But European Community commitments to forestry between 1987 and 1989 amounted to £10·7 million, and our share of these came to about £1·8 million.

India

42. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding United Kingdom aid to India.

Mrs. Chalker: Aid to India continues to be the largest British bilateral aid programme amounting to over £500 million in the last five years.

Sudan and Ethiopia

43. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what prospects Her Majesty's Government see of relieving the threat of famine in Sudan and Ethiopia.

44. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what prospects the Overseas Development Administration sees of relieving the threat of famine for the people of Sudan and Ethiopia.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told the House on 19 December, effective relief machinery is in place in Ethiopia. Massawa port is open. Government and rebel groups are co-operating on relief. If this holds and the international community gives generously, we may be able to avert the worst effects of famine.

The outlook for Sudan is very much worse. Given the scale of the crisis and the lack of Sudanese Government co-operation, it is hard to help, but we shall do what we can to alleviate hardship.

Brazil

45. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on bilateral aid agreements with Brazil on environmental matters.

Mrs. Chalker: We have agreed four projects at a total cost to Her Majesty's Government of £4·6 million. All four are now under way. We expect to approve shortly a further four projects costing £4 million. A number of other project proposals are under discussion and awaiting the approval of the Brazilian authorities.

Third World Debt

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has put forward any proposals to the World Bank to reduce the burden of debt on third world countries.

Mrs. Chalker: Britain has taken the lead in international efforts to provide debt relief for the poorest and most heavily indebted countries. In Trinidad last September, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, put forward proposals for increasing the relief available under earlier schemes. He proposed a reduction of two thirds in the official bilateral debt of eligible countries, with the remainder rescheduled over 25 years.

Tied Aid

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what factors underlie the difference between the figure given by the Minister for Overseas Development, concerning the percentage of British aid that is tied, *Official Report*, 14 December, column *1298*, and the figures for united British aid on table 32, page 220, of the OECD's 1990 report "Development and Co-operation".

Mrs. Chalker: The figure I gave in the House was based on gross public expenditure on overseas bilateral aid in 1989. The figure in the OECD report is based on new

commitments of bilateral official development assistance in 1988. The two figures thus relate to different years and to different measures of aid flows.

Rihand Power Station

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the offer of aid and trade provision aid to support phase 2 of the Rihand power station in India has expired; and whether it will be renewed.

Mrs. Chalker: An offer of aid for stage II of the Rihand power station in India was made on 23 September 1988 subject to appraisal and approval of the project by the Overseas Development Administration. In subsequent exchanges with the Government of India, we have confirmed our interest and emphasised that approval of any aid funding would be subject to our satisfaction with the environmental, technical, financial and economic aspects of the project.

Development Assistance

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will show, in table form *(a)* the level of United Kingdom official development assistance in 1979 and 1989, in current and in constant 1989 prices, *(b)* the size of the aid budget in 1979, and 1990, in current and in constant 1990 prices and *(c)* the total gross public expenditure on overseas aid in 1979 and 1989 in current and in constant 1989 prices in all cases showing the percentage change.

Mrs. Chalker: The information is as follows:

	1979 £ *million*	*1989* £ *million*	*Percentage change on 1979*
1. Net Official Development Assistance			
Current prices	1,016	1,578	+55·3
Constant 1989 prices	2,099	1,578	−24·8
2. Net Aid Programme			
Current Prices	825	1,562	+89·3
Constant 1989 prices	1,705	1,562	− 8·4
3. Gross Public Expenditure			
Current prices	939	1,788	+90·4
Constant 1989 prices	1,940	1,788	− 7·8

Figures for 1990 are not yet available.
Source: British Aid Statistics. An explanatory note on the definitions appears on pp v-ix of the 1990 edition.

Brazilian Amazon

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid money or other support has been given to the Indian co-ordinating group, CIOCA, in the Brazilian Amazon.

Mrs. Chalker: We are not aware of the organisation referred to by the hon. Member.

Aid Grants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many grants of less than £500,000 have been paid or allocated from the aid programme in 1989 and 1990; how many grants of less than £100,000 have been paid or allocated from the aid programme in 1989 and 1990; and how many of these have been for projects in the Amazon region.

Mrs. Chalker: Information is not available in the form requested by the hon. Lady. The relevant information that is readily available is as follows:

Forty-nine new financial aid commitments of less than £500,000 were made in 1989—comparable information for 1990 is not yet available—of which 19 were less than £100,000. None was for the Amazon region. Technical co-operation projects and projects under the joint funding scheme are not included in these totals; but all technical co-operation projects in that region so far entered into during 1990 under the memorandum of understanding with the Brazilian Government are in excess of £500,000.

European Investment Bank

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on guarantees on European investment bank lending entered into under the Lomé conventions and on the procedures for notifying Parliament of these guarantees.

Mrs. Chalker: I have today laid before the House a minute giving details of such guarantees, and the procedure for notifying Parliament of them in the future. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ISIS and the Institut Laue-Langevin

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's contribution to *(a)* the ISIS particle accelerator and *(b)* the Institut Laue-Langevin at Grenoble.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In the financial year 1990-91, the United Kingdom will contribute £10·4 million to ISIS, and £9·9 million to the Institut Laue-Langevin.

Adult Relationships

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what provision is made within the core curriculum for preparation for marriage and adult relationships.

Mr. Atkins: Within the core curriculum, the national curriculum science order requires that pupils should know about the physical and emotional changes during adolescence and understand the need for responsible attitudes to sexual behaviour; the processes of human conception; and the factors necessary for the well-being of young children in the early stages of their development. More broadly, the National Curriculum Council has offered guidance to schools on the incorporation of such topics into the curriculum in its publications on cross-curricular themes: "Curriculum Guidance 5: Health Education" and "Curriculum Guidance 8: Education for Citizenship".

Marriage Guidance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to increase the tuition on marriage guidance counselling included in medical training courses.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The content of the undergraduate medical curriculum is a matter for individual institutions in the light of recommendations from the education committee of the General Medical Council.

Bedfordshire Schools

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total amount of moneys that his Department is allocating to Bedfordshire county council for the maintenance and repair of school buildings for the year 1991-92; what is the amount allocated in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Bedfordshire local education authority is to receive an annual capital guideline of £1·974 million in 1991-92, of which £1·833 million is related to schools, and an allocation of £0·6 million for projects at voluntary aided and special agreement schools. In the current year, Bedfordshire has received an ACG of £2·409 million—£2·309 million is related to schools—and an allocation for VA and SA schools of £15,000. The authority can also use capital receipts and other sources such of funding, including its revenue budget, to support capital expenditure. However, the Government do not allocate to LEAs separately identified recurrent funds for repairs and maintenance: it is for each authority, and, under local management, its schools, to determine what proportion of the total recurrent funds available to them to allocate for that purpose.

Rural Schools Project

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the funding of the rural schools project.

Mr. Fallon: Since 1985 the Government have supported through education support grant expenditure totalling about £7·5 million on projects to improve the range and quality of the curriculum in rural schools in 14 local education authorities. In common with all education support grant programmes, support is limited to a finite period for these pilot projects. Support in 13 of the 14 local education authorities will have ceased by the end of the 1990-91 financial year. Because of a later start, support for Northumberland LEA will end in 1991-92. The programme is being evaluated by Leicester university with the aim of issuing to LEAs a report with recommendations by the end of this year.

Soccer Commissioner

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to establish an independent soccer commissioner to oversee the workings of the existing football authorities.

Mr. Atkins: The administration of association football is a matter for the football authorities.

Nottinghamshire County Council

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional *(a)* loan sanction and *(b)* grant has been granted to Nottinghamshire county council for education purposes for the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The annual capital guideline for education for Nottinghamshire in 1991-92 is £5·167 million. The authority's credit approval, which sets the limit for its borrowing for the year, is calculated for all services and is £15·891 million. The proposed revenue support grant for the charging authorities within the area of the authority for 1991-92 is £146·8 million. As this is paid in support of all services, it is not possible to specify how much supports education expenditure. In addition to this general support, over £7 million of Nottinghamshire's education expenditure is to be supported through specific grants from the programme of grants for education support and training.

Youth Service

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the latest available figures, if he will set out for each local education authority *(a)* the level of expenditure on the youth service and *(b)* the standard spending assessment for the youth service.

Mr. Atkins: The latest year for which outturn expenditure is available is 1988-89. Table 1 shows the actual recurrent expenditure of each local education authority on youth and community services in 1988-89, with the exception of three authorities which failed to make a return. The standard spending assessment does not include a block of expenditure dedicated to the youth service alone, but makes allowance for this expenditure within the "other education services" block, which also allows for adult education. Table 2 shows the amount for each local education authority of the "other education services" block of the standard spending assessment for 1990-91.

Table 1
Expenditure by LEAs on the Youth Service, 1988-89

LEA	*£ million*
Barking	0·697
Barnet	0·966
Bexley	0·758
Brent	2·377
Bromley	0·894
Croydon	1·054
Ealing	1·804
Enfield	0·796
Haringey	n/a
Harrow	0·648
Havering	0·845
Hillingdon	1·018
Hounslow	0·737
Kingston-upon-Thames	0·580
Merton	0·459
Newham	1·104
Redbridge	1·078
Richmond-upon-Thames	0·514
Sutton	0·517
Waltham Forest	1·336
ILEA	35·377
Birmingham	4·396
Coventry	1·095
Dudley	0·983
Sandwell	0·736
Solihull	0·430

LEA	£ million
Walsall	2·305
Wolverhampton	2·070
Knowsley	0·666
Liverpool	2·392
St. Helens	0·328
Sefton	0·843
Wirral	1·512
Bolton	1·057
Bury	0·916
Manchester	n/a
Oldham	0·683
Rochdale	1·453
Salford	0·538
Stockport	0·598
Tameside	1·149
Trafford	0·677
Wigan	0·876
Barnsley	0·551
Doncaster	1·305
Rotherham	1·029
Sheffield	3·038
Bradford	3·127
Calderdale	1·103
Kirklees	1·426
Leeds	6·860
Wakefield	n/a
Gateshead	0·722
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	0·659
North Tyneside	0·585
South Tyneside	1·855
Sunderland	1·010
Isles of Scilly	0·002
Avon	5·269
Bedfordshire	1·131
Berkshire	2·185
Buckinghamshire	2·370
Cambridgeshire	1·780
Cheshire	2·005
Cleveland	2·629
Cornwall	0·787
Cumbria	1·333
Derbyshire	5·066
Devon	2·913
Dorset	1·722
Durham	1·263
East Sussex	1·089
Essex	4·026
Gloucestershire	2·147
Hampshire	3·230
Hereford and Worcester	1·201
Hertfordshire	2·782
Humberside	3·839
Isle of Wight	0·467
Kent	2·708
Lancashire	5·179
Leicestershire	2·946
Lincolnshire	1·096
Norfolk	1·870
North Yorkshire	1·587
Northamptonshire	1·706
Northumberland	0·681
Nottinghamshire	5·233
Oxfordshire	1·325
Salop	1·788
Somerset	2·478
Staffordshire	2·599
Suffolk	2·124
Surrey	2·420
Warwickshire	1·434
West Sussex	1·599
Wiltshire	1·480

Note.—The figures are based on LEA Expenditure Returns to the Department of the Environment

Table 2
Other Services Block of the Education Component of the 1990-91 Standard Spending Assessments

LEA	£ million
City of London	0·081
Camden	5·737
Greenwich	5·051
Hackney	7·525
Hammersmith	4·896
Islington	5·645
Kensington	4·208
Lambeth	9·294
Lewisham	6·459
Southwark	7·312
Tower Hamlets	6·320
Wandsworth	7·677
Westminster	5·846
Barking	2·793
Barnet	5·742
Bexley	3·023
Brent	7·786
Bromley	4·418
Croydon	6·183
Ealing	7·454
Enfield	5·112
Haringey	6·023
Harrow	3·445
Havering	2·980
Hillingdon	3·555
Hounslow	3·935
Kingston	2·054
Merton	3·124
Newham	6·101
Redbridge	4·061
Richmond	2·568
Sutton	2·399
Waltham Forest	5·496
Birmingham	24·201
Coventry	5·951
Dudley	4·201
Sandwell	6·065
Solihull	2·705
Walsall	4·689
Wolverhampton	5·809
Knowsley	3·441
Liverpool	11·000
St. Helens	2·639
Sefton	4·588
Wirral	6·073
Bolton	4·503
Bury	2·394
Manchester	11·484
Oldham	3·877
Rochdale	3·647
Salford	4·445
Stockport	3·773
Tameside	3·511
Trafford	3·298
Wigan	4·072
Barnsley	3·194
Doncaster	4·502
Rotherham	3·805
Sheffield	8·883
Bradford	9·371
Calderdale	3·130
Kirklees	6·288
Leeds	11·675
Wakefield	4·273
Gateshead	3·286
Newcastle	5·581
North Tyne	2·920
South Tyne	2·812
Sunderland	5·018
Isles of Scilly	0·027
Avon	13·037
Bedfordshire	8·013
Berkshire	10·220
Buckinghamshire	8·074
Cambridge	7·944

LEA	£ million
Cheshire	12·028
Cleveland	9·988
Cornwall	5·937
Cumbria	5·899
Derbyshire	12·082
Devon	13·235
Dorset	7·965
Duham	8·862
East Sussex	9·899
Essex	19·474
Gloucestershire	6·533
Hampshire	20·356
Hereford and Worcester	7·989
Hertfordshire	12·388
Humberside	13·047
Isle of Wight	1·720
Kent	19·977
Lancashire	21·194
Leicester	12·975
Lincolnshire	7·439
Norfolk	9·222
North Yorkshire	8·129
Northamptonshire	7·333
Northumberland	3·497
Nottinghamshire	15·882
Oxfordshire	6·885
Shropshire	5·184
Somerset	5·148
Staffordshire	12·762
Suffolk	7·114
Surrey	12·038
Warwickshire	6·040
West Sussex	8·410
Wiltshire	6·643

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department has made any assessment of the likely administrative costs for individual local education authorities arising out of schools achieving grant-maintained status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: LEAs should be able to make savings on administration where schools become grant-maintained. The overall effect on the expenditure of the authority will depend on the extent to which they make such savings.

Youth Work

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out, at 1990 prices, the level of support for voluntary organisations involved in youth work for 1987-88, 1988-89, 1089-90, and 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is given in the table.

Department of Education and Science grants[1] to voluntary youth organisations

England — *£000s*

	Financial Years			
	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Recurrent grants	2,551·8	2,350·0	2,289·1	2,301·0
Capital grants	976·3	531·8	397·2	651·0
Special grants[2]	nil	nil	nil	500·0
Total	3,528·1	2,881·8	2,686·3	3,452·0

[1] In 1990 real terms, applying the GDP deflator as at November 1990.
[2] Interim funding of £500,000 per annum for 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 to the headquarters of London wide education voluntary organisations following the abolition of the ILEA.

Iraqi Students

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students from Iraq attended postgraduate courses at British universities and colleges of higher education in each of the years 1981 to 1990 inclusive.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of students from Iraq enrolled on post-graduate courses at British higher education institutions between 1980-81 and 1989-90 are as follows:

Academic year	*Universities*	*Polytechnics/ Colleges of Higher Education*	*Total*
1980-81	1,225	—	—
1981-82	1,153	45	1,198
1982-83	1,277	54	1,331
1983-84	980	38	1,018
1984-85	716	37	753
1985-86	656	42	698
1986-87	900	51	951
1987-88	892	50	942
1988-89	673	51	724
1989-90	405	[1]33	—

[1] England and Scotland.

No figure is available for the number of students in polytechnics and colleges in 1980-81 and information is not available yet on the number in these institutions in Wales in 1989-90.

Geography

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish for consultation the draft order with attainment targets and programmes of study for geography in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have today published for consultation a draft order with an associated document setting out attainment targets and programmes of study for geography in the national curriculum for pupils aged five to 16, as I am required to do by section 20(5) of the Education Reform Act 1988. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The draft order has been prepared following advice to me from the National Curriculum Council, in the light of its consultations on the proposals made by the former holder of my office and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. I am most grateful to the council for its advice.

I have accepted the bulk of the council's recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study as a basis for further consultation. The National Curriculum Council has recommended one major change to the structure of attainment targets in geography, reducing the total number of attainment targets from seven to five. I have accepted this change and believe that it will be helpful in reducing the assessment load on teachers.

However, I consider that the attainment targets should emphasise more strongly knowledge and understanding of aspects of geography and put less emphasis on assessment of skills which, however desirable, are not particular to geography, and less emphasis on the assessment of pupils' exploration of attitudes and values. I also consider that,

for primary schools, the number of different places to be studied should be smaller than in the recommendations made to me. I have also made other minor changes to the Council's recommendations for attainment targets and programmes of study. Therefore, in accordance with section 20(5)(a)(ii) of the Education Reform Act 1988, I have published a statement of my reasons for departing from the council's advice. Copies have been placed in the Library, with the draft order.

The draft order and documents do not provide for a short course for pupils at key stage 4 who are not taking a geography GCSE. The National Curriculum Council has advised me on this, but I have decided to consider this advice further, particularly with a view to securing maximum flexibility for schools in determining the nature of such short courses. However, it remains my intention that there should be provision within the national curriculum for pupils at key stage 4 to take short geography courses and I shall in due course bring forward a further draft order accordingly.

The draft order for geography sets out a range of essential geographical skills; maintains the emphasis on pupils' knowledge and understanding about places which was a central feature of the proposals issued in June; and ensures that study of the environment remains central to the geography curriculum along with the study of physical and human geography.

The period for consultation on the draft order will end on 15 February 1991. I intend to make the final order in March 1991 in good time for schools to begin teaching national curriculum geography to pupils aged five, seven and 11 from the following autumn. The draft order applies only to England. My right hon. Friend will be publishing separately for consultation a draft order for geography in Wales.

History

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to publish for consultation the draft order with attainment targets and programmes of study for history in the national curriculum.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have today published for consultation a draft order with an associated document setting out attainment targets and programmes of study for history in the National Curriculum for pupils aged five to 16, as I am required to do by section 20(5) of the Education Reform Act 1988. Copies have been placed in the Library.

The draft order has been prepared on the basis of advice from the National Curriculum Council following consultation on the proposals made in July by the former holder of my office. The council's advice on attainment targets and programmes of study responds to a number of proposals and requests made by my predecessor. In the light of that advice, the proposed number of attainment targets has been reduced from four to three. The programmes of study are now set out in a simpler format, and are less detailed and prescriptive. The proposed core course of study for pupils aged 14 to 16 has also been redesigned by the NCC, along the lines indicated by my predecessor.

I have made certain further changes, as explained in the letter to those being consulted, to make it clear that the focus of study of this unit should be the first half of the twentieth century. I believe that it is right to draw some distinction between the study of history and the study of current affairs.

The curriculum requirements I am now proposing in this final stage of consultation will provide a sound basis for the acquisition of knowledge and understanding of British, European and world history. The attainment targets will ensure that knowledge, understanding and skills are rigorously assessed. The programmes of study will provide a clear framework of historical content to be taught while leaving teachers a degree of freedom in the design of schemes of work. I believe that this represents the successful outcome of a long period of consultation and public debate.

The period of consultation on the draft order will end on 15 February 1991. I intend to make the final order in March 1991 in good time for the schools to begin teaching national curriculum history to pupils aged five, seven and 11 from the following autumn.

The draft order applies only to England. My right hon. Friend will be publishing separately for consultation a draft order for history in Wales.

Agricultural and Food Research Council

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the research establishments and projects respectively which have been granted moneys from the Agricultural and Food Research Council; and if he will list the amounts involved.

Mr. Alan Howarth *[holding answer 20 December 1990]:* The research institutes that have received grants from the AFRC to meet recurrent and capital expenditure in the year to 31 March 1991 are as follows, the amount of the grants also being shown:

	£'000
Institute of Arable Crops Research	11,235
Institute of Animal Health	15,711
Institute of Animal Physiology and Genetics Research	12,382
Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research	10,512
Horticulture Research International	9,868
Institute of Plant Science Research	6,114
Institute of Food Research	16,249
Institute of Engineering Research	4,729

The AFRC currently makes approximately 1,069 research grants to some 64 higher education institutions, totalling approximately £52 million, of which about £15 million is allocated per annum. Full details are given in a detailed print out which I am sending to the hon. Member. Copies have been placed in the Library.

Further information relating to projects undertaken in AFRC institutes and higher education institutions supported by AFRC is included in the AFRC handbook 1990, copies of which have also been placed in the Library.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Traffic Fines

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is his intention to allow London borough councils to retain fine income from local road traffic offences to pay for improvements in road traffic schemes in their areas.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Revenue from fines for road traffic offences, like the revenue from other criminal penalties, is paid into the Consolidated Fund. However, the Road Traffic Bill provides that contravention of certain orders relating to parking places in London should no longer be a criminal offence and that local authorities should assume responsibility for enforcing these parking controls. Under the Bill, local authorities would retain income collected by way of penalty charges for infringements and would be able to use it for specified parking and traffic related purposes.

Magistrates Courts (Staff)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to extend the remit of the Parliamentary Commission for Administration to include investigation of complaints against magistrates courts staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have not yet reached decisions on the future organisation of the service in the light of the report of the magistrates' courts scrutiny. It would not be sensible to consider the remit of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in relation to magistrates courts service staff separately from the broader organisation issues.

Taylor Report

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has immediate plans to implement the Taylor report; and if he has discussed with the Football League and Football Association the effects arising from the non-implementation of the report.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Lord Justice Taylor's final report on the Hillsborough stadium disaster made 76 specific recommendations, the great majority of which have now been implemented by the responsible authorities.

We have made it clear that the primary responsibility for the reduction of standing accommodation at football league grounds in accordance with the timetable proposed by Lord Justice Taylor rests with the clubs themselves. We have also indicated to the Football League and to the Football Association that we are prepared to accept variations from the interim timetable recommended by Lord Justice Taylor provided that there is realistic progress towards the dates by which the use of standing accommodation should be discontinued. We shall look to the Football Licensing Authority to advise us, in due course, whether progress towards all seated accommodation is satisfactory. The football authorities are well aware that enforcement powers are available, if it is not.

Mr. R. Jerrard

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the entitlement of Mr. R. Jerrard of Warwick for a long service and good conduct medal as an inspector in the City of London police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The royal warrant which instituted the long service and good conduct medal offers no scope for discretion to award the medal to anyone who has served less than 22 years police service.

Overseas Electors

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, on Tuesday 18 December, *Official Report*, columns 102-3, if he will now give the total number of overseas electors included in the 1991-92 register published by individual electoral registration officers on 28 November, together with numbers for each constituency and for each region of Scotland and county in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the number of overseas electors included in the draft electoral register is still being collated. We shall shortly make the figures known to the House.

Community Charge

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of people in each of the 32 London boroughs who have been summonsed for the non-payment of the community charge.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally on the number of people in each London borough who have been summonsed for non-payment of the community charge. However, the table shows the number of summonses heard at magistrates courts in the London area from April to September 1990, the latest date for which the information is available.

Number of community charge summonses heard at magistrates courts in the London area April-September 1990

Magistrates court	*Summonses*
City of London	
Guildhall justice room	76
Inner London	
Hampstead	1,500
Horseferry Road	2,962
South Western	1,671
Thames	3,070
Outer London	
Barking	33
Barnet/Hendon	86
Bromley	7,187
Croydon	14,212
Ealing/Acton	590
Enfield	3,764
Havering	12
Feltham/Brentford	209
Kingston-upon-Thames	7,679
Wimbledon	422
Stratford/West Ham	6,600
Redbridge	575
Sutton	8,533
Waltham Forest	853

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of people who have been sentenced to a period of imprisonment by courts covering the Greater London area who have been summonsed for the non-payment of their community charge.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information for 1990 is not yet available.

Police Training

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training has been given by United Kingdom police officers to police officers in the Punjab region of India in the last five years to date; what training has been received by police officers from the Punjab in the United Kingdom over the same period; what was the nature of such training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no central record of any training having been given by United Kingdom police officers to police officers in India in the last five years.

Central records, which do not distinguish between officers from the Punjab and those from other parts of India, show that the following visits were made by Indian police officers to the United Kingdom for training purposes over this period.

1986

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss its organisation and structure.

1987

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss training.

Two officers visited the Metropolitan Police, Ashford Police Training Centre and the Police Staff College, Bramshill.

One officer was attached to the Metropolitan Police and the Police Staff College to study training management.

1988

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police and the Police Staff College to discuss training.

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss the day-to-day operation of a police station.

One officer visited the Home Office, Metropolitan and West Midlands Police to discuss counter-terrorism.

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss the ability of the police to handle new problems.

1989

Two officers undertook a training attachment with the Police Staff College, and the West Yorkshire and Metropolitan Police forces.

Four officers visited the Metropolitan Police CID Training School at Hendon.

Two officers visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss VIP security.

Four officers undertook a Criminal Records Computerisation Course at Merseyside and subsequent attachment to the Police National Computer Organisation.

One officer visited the Police Staff College, Metropolitan Police, Lancashire Constabulary, Kent Constabulary and West Yorkshire Police to discuss recruitment, training, promotion, computers, drugs and terrorism.

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss training methods and courses.

1990

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss the ways in which the police assist the courts.

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police and Ashford Police Training Centre to discuss anti-terrorist and general police training.

One officer attended the Overseas Command Course, Police Staff College, Bramshill.

In addition, in each of the last five years, 10 officers from the Indian police service have attended a specially designed overseas command course at West Yorkshire police force training school.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training has been given by United Kingdom police officers to police officers in Sri Lanka in the last five years to date; what training has been received by Sri Lankan police officers in the United Kingdom over the same period; what was the nature of such training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There is no central record of any training having been given by United Kingdom police officers to police officers in Sri Lanka in the last five years, although a detective inspector from the Metropolitan police went to Sri Lanka in 1987 for a short advisory visit.

Central records show that the following visits were made by Sri Lankan police officers to the United Kingdom for training purposes over this period.

1986

Two officers attended the Overseas Command Course at the Police Staff College, Bramshill.

1987

None.

1988

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss drugs and new methods of fighting crime.

One officer attended a traffic management course with Lancashire Constabulary and the Metropolitan Police.

Two officers were attached to the Metropolitan Police to discuss VIP security.

1989

One officer visited the Home Office to discuss the right to silence.

One officer visited the Police Staff College, Bramshill, to discuss police training.

One officer visited the Metropolitan Police to discuss taxi licensing.

Two officers visited the Home Office, Metropolitan and Essex Police forces to discuss computers in police work.

Two officers attended the Overseas Command Course, Police Staff College, Bramshill.

1990

One officer attended a VIP Security Course at Lancashire Constabulary.

One officer attended the Overseas Command Course, Police Staff College, Bramshill.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he now proposes to take to improve the facilities for women prison officers who are now working at Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of toilets and showers have been designated for the use of female staff only. Current redevelopment will also permit the incorporation of dedicated female toilets, showers and changing rooms in the reception area and hospital wing in spring 1991. Additional facilities for women staff will come into use in 1992 when the current refurbishment of D wing is complete. All of these developments have been agreed following consultations at HM prison Wandsworth.

Police Medals

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers in the past 10 years failed to qualify for long service and good conduct medals because their official retirement date fell within two weeks of the qualifying period; and how many exceptions have been granted.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not held centrally.

Immigration

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's position on immigration, visas and asylum being determined by a European union, following the agreement at the European Council that the issue be considered; and when these issues will be considered by an intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The conclusion of the European Council was that consideration should be given to whether and how activities currently conducted in an inter-governmental framework could be
"brought within the ambit of the Union".
Immigration, visas and asylum were cited as examples of matters which might be considered for such treatment.

This part of the European Council's conclusions is clearly distinguished from the part relating to possible extensions of Community competence. We do not believe, and it is not envisaged, that immigration, visas and asylum matters should be brought within the Treaty of Rome.

The intergovernmental conference on political union is now under way and the Government will play a full part in the discussions. It is not yet clear at what stage particular individual items will be considered.

Television Licence Fee

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will announce the findings of the independent consultancy on the level of the television licence fee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following a recommendation of the Peacock committee in 1986 (Cmnd. 9824), for the three years April 1988 to April 1990 the television licence fee was increased annually in line with changes in the retail prices index. My right hon. Friend, Lord Waddington announced on 11 October 1990 that he had appointed Price Waterhouse as independent consultants to help set the level of the fee from April 1991 onwards. They were asked to assess how future increases in the fee could be set below the level of inflation measured by the RPI, and the consequences of a range of formulas for such increases, while maintaining the BBC's "cornerstone" role in British broadcasting.

Price Waterhouse reported to me in mid December, and the management summary of its report is being published today by HMSO. The remainder will not be released since it contains commercially sensitive material.

The consultants concluded that, while maintaining the present level of service, the BBC would be able to make financial improvements totalling £203 million over the five years from 1991 to 1996. These comprise £72 million in extra revenue and £131 million in savings. In addition, the BBC is required to make savings of £180 million to finance its expected future deficit. The Price Waterhouse report has been discussed with the consultants and the BBC and I am satisfied that improvements of this order are achievable. I therefore believe that, in the interests of licence fee payers, who require a licence if they wish to watch a public television service, the fee should now be held below the level of the RPI increase.

Price Waterhouse suggested two ways of doing this, both with the same net effect over five years. I have decided that its proposal to set the April 1991 increase at 3 per cent. below RPI, with annual increases at RPI over the subsequent four years is the better of the two methods. I intend, however, to reassess the position in three years' time, taking the opportunity to review the BBC's progress in achieving efficiency gains and further developing alternative sources of revenue. Price Waterhouse has also made some further suggestions to me about the operation of the licence fee, and I will also consider within the same time scale whether they should be implemented. The longer-term future of the licence fee as the principal means of financing the BBC will be considered as part of the review of the present charter which will be necessary before its expiry in December 1996.

The licence fee increase each April has been calculated on the basis of the annual increase in RPI in the 12 months up to the preceding September, in the same way as increases in pensions and other state benefits. The RPI figure for September 1990 was 10·9 per cent., and applying an RPI-3 per cent. factor of 7·9 per cent. to the unrounded 1990 figures leads to new fees from 1 April 1991 of £77 for a colour licence and £25·50 for a monochrome licence. The necessary regulations will be laid before the House in due course.

THE ARTS

Welsh National Opera

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the sums of money from all sources which he is making available directly from his Department or in conjunction with others to the Welsh National Opera in the present financial year; what was the comparable figure in 1989-90; and if he will list the projected figures for 1991-92 and subsequent years insofar as firm or tentative projections have been made.

Mr. Renton: The Welsh National Opera is funded jointly by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Welsh Arts Council. The information requested is as follows:

£'000s

	ACGB	*WAC*
1989-90	2,669	1,791
1990-91	2,935	1,972
1991-92	[1]3,100	2,130

[1] Provisional allocation.

Levels of funding for future years have yet to be determined.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Minister for the Arts what discussions have taken place between his officials and the Welsh National Opera about finances; what differences have arisen over the financial contribution of the Government to the Welsh National Opera; and what differences still remain.

Mr. Renton: The funding of the Welsh National Opera is a matter for the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Welsh Arts Council. The chairman of the ACGB met the chairman and members of the board of the WNO on 8 January to discuss the company's current financial position. I understand that the meeting was helpful and constructive. Further detailed discussions are being arranged between the two funding bodies and the company, with the intention of achieving a mutually acceptable outcome. I very much welcome this positive development.

PRIME MINISTER

Hereditary Baronetcy Awards

Mr. Rees: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy with regard to the considerations which he takes into account before making any recommendation for the award of a hereditary baronetcy; when this policy last changed; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It was the policy of my predecessor to consider recommending hereditary honours in exceptional cases. I propose to follow a similar practice.

European Community

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what treaty amendments are being considered for submission to the European Community.

The Prime Minister: The Conclusions of the Rome European Councils on 27 and 28 October and on 14 and 15 December listed a number of areas where treaty revision would be considered in the context of the intergovernmental conferences on political union and EMU.

Rural Housing

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Prime Minister if he will visit the Montgomery constituency to receive representations concerning housing for young people in rural areas.

The Prime Minister: I have no present plans to visit Montgomeryshire. Close partnership between local authorities, housing associations and the private sector is essential in securing appropriate housing for young people, as for others, in rural areas. Housing for Wales is giving strong assistance by devoting 25 per cent. of its programme to rural areas; its survey of housing and young people in rural Wales will help to target future investment.

Export Licences

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister whether he has any plans to change the procedure for applying for export licences where there is a defence implication; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) by my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on 29 November 1990 at columns 1060-61.

Publicity and Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister, further to his reply on 17 December, *Official Report*, column *15*, if he will publish the guidance given to departmental Ministers regarding the use of publicity and advertising paid for by public funds.

The Prime Minister: The conventions on Government publicity and advertising have already been published. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 28 June 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) at column *311*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Community

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what distinctions are drawn in policy between defence and security in the context of negotiations on extending the competence of the EC.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Twelve already discuss some aspects of security within the framework of European political co-operation. As part of the process of closer foreign policy co-ordination among the Twelve, we see scope to develop this further, but would not support the extension of Community competence into this area. Defence itself—the planning, organisation, command, control and commitment of military forces—is one aspect of broader security policy. We believe that NATO should remain the main forum for consultation on defence matters affecting the alliance as a whole. Closer European co-operation on defence could be achieved by strengthening the Western European Union.

Khmer Rouge

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose in the United Nations Security Council a ban on the movement of arms and logistic support to the Khmer Rouge by whatever route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: United Nations Security Council resolution 668 of 20 September 1990 endorsed the framework for a comprehensive political settlement of the Cambodia conflict, an integral element of which is the cessation of outside military assistance to all Cambodian parties.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will call on the Chinese Government to end their support for the Khmer Rouge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 17 December to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd).

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will halt all British support in whatever form, direct or indirect, to the Khmer Rouge and its allies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) of 17 December. We have never given and will never give support of any kind to the Khmer Rouge.

Iraq

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Iraqi diplomats have left the United Kingdom at the request of Her Majesty's Government; and on what dates in each of the past three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following members of Iraqi embassy staff have been requested by Her Majesty's Government to leave the United Kingdom.

1988: Four—one on 30 September 1988
—three on 29 October 1988.
1989: None.
1990: 11—Six on 17 September 1990
—four on 19 September 1990
—one on 10 November 1990
1991: 9—3 January 1991.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British diplomats have left Iraq at the request of the Iraqi authorities; and on what dates in each of the past three years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Seven members of the British embassy in Baghdad have been declared persona non grata in the past three years; four in October 1988, two in September 1990 and one in November 1990.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of Her Majesty's diplomatic corps are currently accredited to the British embassy in Baghdad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have recalled our ambassador in Baghdad and the remaining members of his staff for consultations.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representatives of the Government of Iraq are currently accredited to the embassy of Iraq in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Fifteen diplomatic agents; twelve administrative and technical staff; five service staff.

Cambodia

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the Government of Thailand in their efforts to make peace with the Cambodian Government and to remove Khmer Rouge bases from Thai soil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We support all constructive efforts to achieve peace in Cambodia. Thailand has played a helpful part in recent efforts to establish a functioning Supreme National Council and remains a key regional player in the search for a comprehensive settlement of the Cambodian conflict.

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom will now deal with the Government of Hun Sen as the legitimate Government of Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In my reply to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), of 17 December, I reaffirmed our willingness to talk to representatives of the Hun Sen regime to urge them to co-operate in restoring peace to Cambodia on the basis of the five's framework. Accordingly, on 22 December the head of the south-east Asian Department in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office met a Cambodian Vice-Minister, Mr. Uch Kiman, in Paris. This meeting did not constitute formal dealings with the Hun Sen regime as the legitimate Government of Cambodia.

Corfu Channel Incident

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are currently being taken to settle outstanding financial questions relating to the Corfu channel incident of 1946.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British and Albanian officials met in Geneva on 18 and 19 December to discuss outstanding bilateral issues.

Albania

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are currently being taken to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Socialist Republic of Albania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British and Albanian officials met in Geneva on 18 and 19 December to discuss outstanding bilateral issues, including the restoration of diplomatic relations.

Mr. Tariq Aziz

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons he has opposed the visit of Tariq Aziz to meet EEC representatives in Rome.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 4 December the Foreign Minister of the European Community invited the Iraqi Foreign Minister to meet the presidency following his meeting with the United States Secretary of State. This invitation has been renewed several times, most recently after the EPC ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 4 January, but has been declined by the Iraqi Government.

El Salvador

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage the Government of El Salvador to accept the United Nations peace proposal.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have frequently made clear to all sides in El Salvador the importance we and the international community attach to a successful outcome of the peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations. We condemn the renewed offensive by the FMLN at the end of last year.

The Gulf

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of maps delineating the precise border, with all co-ordinates, which existed between Iraq and Kuwait after each significant alteration since their establishment in international law; and if he will place a copy of each relevant treaty, agreement or draft agreement to which the United Kingdom was a party which is relevant to the establishment of that border.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Extracts from the Anglo-Turkish convention of 1913, and copies of letters by the Prime Minister of Iraq and the Sheikh of Kuwait in 1932 confirming recognition of the Iraq-Kuwait frontiers, are being placed in the Library of the House. A map attached to the 1913 convention may be examined at the Public Records Office.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what preparations have been made by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission for the eventuality of war in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am replying in the absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who is chairman of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The answer is none. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for commemorating and caring for the graves of those who died while serving in the armed forces of the Commonwealth during the first and second world wars.

Romanian Orphans

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the voluntary organisations known to be providing aid to Romanian orphans and the amount of aid, if known; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We do not have details of all British voluntary aid to Romanian children, but we are aware of a number of the organisation concerned. I shall write to my hon. Friend with a list. We have no information about the amount of aid. We fully support all efforts to improve conditions for children in Romania.

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action his Department is taking to ensure that India respects the human rights of people who are now living in the Indian occupied area of Kashmir before any aid allocation to India is considered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The importance we attach to "good government" when considering our aid programme is well known. While we support the Indian Government's efforts to deal with the serious challenge from terrorist violence in Kashmir, we have regularly made clear to them our concern that human rights must be respected.

European Community Ombudsman

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the views of Her Majesty's Government on the concept of a Community ombudsman to protect the rights of citizens in the EC, following the agreement of the European Council that the matter should be examined, and on the matters which will be considered in relation to the particular problems in some member states.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Suggestions have been made by other member states for establishing a European Community ombudsman. These will be discussed in the intergovernmental conference. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said in the debate on 11 June last year, we will examine this idea sympathetically, on condition that it does not duplicate or overlap with member states' existing arrangements and provides a service of value to the individual citizen without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the results of the investigation by Customs and Excise into licences granted to Matrix Churchill for sales of machine tools to Iraq; and if he will place a copy of the results, when completed, in the Library.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Investigation of possible export licensing offences is a matter for the Commissioners of Customs and Excise, acting in their independent law enforcement capacity. They carry out their inquiries thoroughly and expeditiously. It would not be appropriate for information relating to an investigation to be made public other than in the course of court proceedings.

EC Support Framework

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the 1990 allocation of the Community support framework for operational programmes 3 and 4 from the Commission of the European Community was received by his Department; and if it is currently attracting interest payments.

Mr. Maude: The United Kingdom's contribution to the Community budget is paid into a Community account held in the United Kingdom, from which payments to the United Kingdom are also usually made. For the structural funds' objective 3 and 4 programmes, EC payments to the United Kingdom follow the pattern of our other budget receipts. On authorisation by the Commission from time to time, the sums are withdrawn from the Community's account in the United Kingdom and paid to the sponsor department for onward transmission to end recipients. Payments for objective 3 and 4 programmes have therefore been made by the Treasury when authorised by the Commission; and subsequently by Departments when they have been vetted. The United Kingdom derives the benefit from any balance on the Community's account which the Commission has not authorised to be paid for any particular purpose.

Expatriates (Middle East)

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the position of British expatriates presently working in the middle east in the event of any forceable repatriation of such individuals with respect to the conditions pertaining to their exemption from British taxation for the period of their repatriation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 18 December 1990, at column *111*.

VAT

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what vehicle of decision making within the EEC is to be used to complete proceedings to achieve approximation of the VAT system and excise duties within the EEC to satisfy the requirements of a true internal market; and for what reasons Her Majesty's Government agreed that the proceedings should be completed in the near future.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The vehicle within the EC for deciding the arrangements for the operation of the VAT and excise systems after 1992 is the EC's Economic and Financial Affairs Council—ECOFIN—acting unanimously on proposals from the Commission.

Following extensive consultations with representatives of British industry, on 12 December 1990 the United Kingdom lifted its reserve on an outline agreement for the VAT control system to operate after 1992. Also, at ECOFIN on 17 December agreement was reached on the general principles which will form the basis of the system for excise controls after 1992. These have cleared the way for discussions on the details of the systems, early agreement on which is essential for businesses and tax administrations to have sufficient time to plan and implement technical changes.

The Government believe that the framework arrangements on the VAT and excise technical systems meet the requirement to remove fiscal frontiers by 1 January 1993, which is a key part of completing the single market. The Government remain of the view that centrally determined tax approximation is neither necessary nor desirable and that market forces can bring about such convergence of indirect tax rates as is necessary.

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how long it takes the Customs and Excise to process VAT registered trade importation packages from overseas; what is the normal expected delay before passing valuable goods packages to the Post Office, and what is the process in the case of VAT-exempt goods of more than 100 years old.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: All packages imported through the post remain under the control of the Post Office and are presented by them to customs for clearance. Clearance times vary according to the nature and origin of the contents and the quality of accompanying information. Importers are notified of the arrival of all goods exceeding £2,000 in value, or £1,300 in the case of Datapost packages, and they are required to submit a formal entry. On receipt of that entry by customs, clearance is normally effected without delay. Where relief from customs duty and VAT is claimed in respect of goods of any value over 100 years old a separate declaration by the importer is necessary. Subsequent action will depend upon the nature of the declaration made and supporting evidence produced.

Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the economic implications of central Government control of local authority capital borrowing.

Mr. Mellor: Central Government control over local authority borrowing for capital purposes forms an important part of the overall system of public expenditure control, and is therefore essential to the economic health of the country. This control also reduces the risk that community chargepayers may face excessive debt interest payments and that an excessive burden of debt may prevent local authorities from maintaining adequate and efficient services.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the effective upper and lower limits which sterling is permitted to move to by comparison with the deutschemark within the ERM; and if he will publish a table showing the movement of sterling since joining the ERM.

Mr. Maples: Sterling's upper and lower limits in the ERM against the deutschemark are DM 3·132 and DM 2·778 respectively. Sterling's effective upper and lower limits against the deutschemark are determined by the need for sterling to remain within its bilateral limits against all other ERM currencies simultaneously. The effective upper limit against the deutschemark is the rate at which sterling would reach its upper limit against the weakest ERM currency. The effective lower limit is determined by sterling's position against the strongest currency in the system. The effective limits vary over time in line with the movements of exchange rates within the system.

Sterling's movement against the deutschemark since its entry to the ERM are as follows:

Average exchange rate week commencing	*DM/£*
1990	
October 8	3·013
15	2·963
22	2·955
29	2·950
November 5	2·933
12	2·901
19	2·911
26	2·925
December 3	2·894
10	2·872
17	2·872
24	2·884
1991	
January [1]2	2·909
7	2·9205

[1] Week commencing Wednesday 2 January.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will consider withdrawing sterling from the ERM; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maples: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Council

Mr. Mans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Brussels on 19 and 20 December.

Mr. Gummer: Together with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the Scottish Office, Lord Strathclyde, I attended the Council of Fisheries Ministers in Brussels on 19 and 20 December 1990.

Once again, after a considerable struggle, we obtained recognition of our Hague preference for all the stocks

where it was relevant and secured flexibility to take both an increased quantity of western mackerel east of 4 west and an extension to the area in which it may be taken.

We also secured increases in the United Kingdom quotas proposed by the Commission for 26 of the 49 stocks of interest to our fleet. As a result we now have increases in 13 quotas compared to 1990 with 21 quotas remaining the same. The increases in the cod and haddock quota proposals in the North sea, for whiting and cod in the Irish sea and for a number of plaice and sole quotas in the channel and the south-west will be particularly welcome to the industry. We have however sought to avoid any increases which would not be in accordance with conservation needs.

In addition, we secured a very useful quota swap arrangement with the Netherlands so obtaining all the Dutch quotas in area VII as well as some North sea herring and sole.

Given the state of the North sea and west of Scotland cod and haddock stocks it was essential to take action to reduce effort. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea had made clear that, by themselves, TACs and quotas could not be relied upon to achieve this. Accordingly the Council agreed to an eight-day tie-up rule for vessels which have taken significant quantities of these stocks. I was disappointed that we could not secure an arrangement which would allow fishermen the alternative of using more selective gear. I put on record at the Council that I would be pursuing this and I received a helpful response from the Commissioner.

We fought for improved technical conservation measures. We made it clear that we were prepared to agree to an increase in mesh size in the North sea and west of Scotland to 100mm diamond with a 90mm square mesh panel. We regret that, because some member states did not want their fishermen to be affected, the Council could not agree to this. However, we secured agreement that the Council must return to this issue in the near future and in order to provide further evidence to the other member states we will be commissioning more research on the use of different mesh sizes and square mesh panels, together with further research on whiting.

We are encouraged by such experience as we already have where practical fishermen have put square mesh panels into practice and have liked the result. This is exactly the kind of conservation measure which ought to be put into practice along with TACs and which the Council has failed to adopt. We shall now be consulting with our industry about introducing unilaterally a 90mm square mesh panel. This will be important in protecting the 1990 year class of haddock.

Amendments to EC regulation 4028/86 on fisheries structures were agreed which include the extension of grant aid to boats less than 9 metres and measures to encourage EC boats to fish in third country waters. Changes were made at the Council meeting to the proposed rates of grant for these measures to reflect the overcapacity in the EC fleet.

On autonomous tariff quotas a balanced package was achieved which should assist the processors including a tariff suspension at 10 per cent. for hake and alaska pollack fillet blocks.

Overall, although I regret that the Council could not agree on technical conservation measures I consider that we have secured a package which is consistent with conservation of the stocks and which should benefit catchers, processors and consumers.

Cod

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what would be the implications for likely cod landings at Lowestoft in 1991 of invoking the Hague preference for cod.

Mr. Curry: The Hague preference has not been invoked for North sea cod.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the allocation of cod quotas from the middle to end of December; and what distributions were made between Scottish and English fisheries and between sector and non-sector.

Mr. Curry: There are four United Kingdom cod fisheries. Fishing for North sea cod by all licensed United Kingdom fishing vessels was suspended on Saturday 15 December 1990, following exhaustion of the licensed fleet's share of the United Kingdom quota. Fishing by unlicensed under 10 m vessels continued in this fishery until the end of the month. Fishing for west of Scotland cod by all United Kingdom fishing vessels was prohibited on 5 December 1990, following exhaustion of the entire United Kingdom quota. The Irish sea cod fishery remained open for the whole of December, both to those English and Northern Irish producer organisations with sectoral allocations, and to all other vessels with the necessary licence subject to a 2 tonnes per vessel per month catch restriction. The channel cod fishery, in which there were no sectoral allocations in 1990, also remained open to all appropriately licensed vessels throughout December, subject to a 5 tonnes per vessel per month catch restriction.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what redress he expects to make in 1991 to English fishermen who fished within quota for 1990; and what sanctions against those who overfished in 1990 he plans to take.

Mr. Curry: Arrangements for penalties and compensation to apply to overfishing in 1990 have already been agreed with the industry. Under these arrangements, where a group exceeded its allocation in 1990, the overfish will not be included in track records when calculating the 1991 allocation. Where that overfish led to the United Kingdom quota being exceeded, and other groups being disadvantaged by the early closure of a fishery, the overfish will be deducted from the offending group's 1991 allocation. This deduction will then be used to compensate groups prejudiced by the overfishing, after taking account of those groups' likely uptake had the fishery not been closed.

North Sea Sole

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his Department's role in collection of data which led to the closure of the North sea sole fishery in November.

Mr. Curry: The closure of the North sea sole fishery in November 1990 was due to a combination of factors. They included increased effort in the fishery, an increase in the size of fish caught as a result of earlier conservation measures, and increased landings abroad as well as a delay in some landing data appearing on Departments' central computers.

Milk Marketing Scheme

Mr. Turner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the report of the Consumers' Committee for England and Wales on the milk marketing scheme 1933.

Mr. Gummer: Yes.

Fishing Industry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has of undersized cod, plaice and sole being landed and sold at fishing ports in the Netherlands.

Mr. Curry: The enforcement of EC fisheries regulations in the Netherlands is a matter for the Dutch authorities. The EC Commission's inspectorate monitors enforcement arrangements in member states, but I have no information about the landing and sale of undersized fish in the Netherlands.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on how his Department informs fishing organisations, companies and individuals on sudden unexpected changes in the fishing regime around United Kingdom ports in general, and Lowestoft in particular.

Mr. Curry: Changes to fisheries management measures are publicised by means of a news release issued to the trade press, and at the same time Fisheries Departments write to national and local fishing organisations. Local fisheries officers also make every effort to inform fishermen in their area individually. Variations to fishing licences are issued by local port offices as soon as possible after the announcement.

Small Family Farms

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and food if he will make a statement on his assessment of the implication for the future of the small family farm of the GATT discussions.

Mr. Curry: The Community offer on agricultural reform remains under negotiation in the GATT round. It is premature to forecast the final agreement or its impact. The Commission has given an undertaking to make proposals for changes in agricultural support, consistent with a GATT agreement, aimed at ensuring a viable future for Community farmers.

Sheep Farmers (Subsidies)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals to decouple subsidies to sheep farmers from farm production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Support to sheep farmers in the United Kingdom is provided primarily through the EC sheep regime and the system of hill livestock compensatory allowances, which are also governed by EC regulations. Any proposals fundamentally to change the basis on which this support is granted would, therefore, be a matter for the European Commission.

Cereals

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to ensure that S.I. (1975) No. 655, the Measurement of Cereals for Import and Export Purposes Regulations 1975, is conformed to by the intervention board.

Mr. Curry: The Measurement of Cereals for Import and Export Purposes Regulations 1975 (S.I. 1975 No. 655) lay down certain provisions in relation to trade in cereals between the United Kingdom and other member states of the European Community. The intervetion board does not engage in intra-Community trade in cereals and the regulations are not considered relevant to its operations.

Food Aid

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the expected impact of the food aid programme for the Soviet Union agreed at the European Council on 15 December 1990, on planned EC spending on agriculture.

Mr. Curry: The European Council agreed to supply 250 million ecu—£174 million—of food aid to the USSR. This will be funded from the underspend in the 1990 European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund guarantee budget. No decision has been made on the type and quantities of food involved and it is not yet possible to assess any other effects on Community agricultural expenditure.

Farming Incomes

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on trends in farming incomes.

Mr. Curry: Forecasts of farm incomes in 1990 will be published in "Agriculture in the United Kingdom" later this month.

Salmonella

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conclusions he has reached in his review of the Government's policy on the control of salmonella.

Mr. Gummer: In 1989 the Government introduced a comprehensive programme for tackling the problem of salmonella in poultry and eggs. This programme has been effective in reducing potential sources of infection and will be maintained. I have made it clear, however, that the detailed form of control would be kept under careful review in the light of developing knowledge and experience. This has been done, taking into account the views of the Department of Health and the public health laboratory service.

The Government measures are aimed at reducing infection throughout the production chain, from the supply of feedingstuffs to the production of healthy breeding stock and controls on laying flocks. This

integrated approach is the best means of minimising the risk of infection in all types of poultry flocks and will continue.

The measures on feedingstuffs include statutory controls on the production of animal protein, which require regular sampling of feed and reprocessing if any salmonella is found. Rigorous controls are also applied to imports of animal protein. In addition the feed industry operate codes of practice aimed at ensuring that their products are free of salmonella.

The programme for controlling salmonella in breeding flocks concentrates in particular on monitoring of progeny through the hatcheries and the slaughter of infected breeding stock, both in the egg production and poultry meat sectors, in order to minimise the risk of transmission of infection to production flocks. Through the application of these measures to date 35 broiler breeder flocks and five layer breeder flocks have been compulsorily slaughtered with payment of compensation. These arrangements will continue unchanged.

In relation to commercial flocks producing eggs for human consumption, I have reviewed carefully information from the state veterinary service and the public health laboratory service on the incidence of infection and trends in human food poisoning. It is clear that a continued distinction needs to be drawn between the many different types of salmonella. From the start the Government measures have concentrated on two particular types which had been considered a potential risk to human health, while retaining the flexibility to alter the coverage of the programme in the light of further evidence on the risk from different types of salmonella.

One of these types, salmonella enteritidis, was responsible for the increase in human food poisoning cases which led to the introduction of the Government measures. Data from laboratory testing indicate that the incidence of salmonella enteritidis in the commercial laying sector has subsequently dropped significantly. However, salmonella enteritidis remains a significant cause of human food poisoning. I have therefore concluded that it remains essential to maintain the compulsory slaughter programme for all laying flocks which are infected with salmonella enteritidis. The other type which has hitherto been treated in the same way is salmonella typhimurium. In the light of further scientific data I have concluded that the arrangements for dealing with this type in relation to laying flocks should be modified. The Chief Medical Officer agrees with this view.

Evidence from the public health laboratory service indicates that the number of cases of salmonella typhimurium food poisoning in humans has fallen significantly over the last year and the number of outbreaks of salmonella typhimurium food poisoning linked to eggs is now extremely low. Unlike salmonella enteritidis, this type is not predominantly associated with poultry but is frequently found in the environment and in other animal species. When it does occur in poultry which are being reared for egg production, it is predominantly a disease of young birds—pullets—rather than adult birds. Infection in pullet flocks presents no direct risk to public health, as the birds are not producing eggs. Young birds can be treated and my officials will give advice to flock owners on appropriate treatment arrangements. The automatic slaughter policy for laying flocks infected with salmonella typhimurium will be discontinued but the arrangements for monitoring and reporting of infection will continue. Salmonella typhimurium will therefore be placed in the same category as all types of salmonella, other than salmonella enteritidis, where existing measures will continue to be taken where necessary to protect public health.

The Government have published today the second part of the report of the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food. Among the committee's conclusions is a recommendation that the topic of salmonella in eggs should be considered by the new advisory committee and steering group on the microbiological safety of food. The Government have agreed in their response that the issue of salmonella in eggs needs to be kept under close review and will be examining a number of issues which remain to be resolved. One of these issues, on which research is currently under way, is the pasteurisation of eggs from infected flocks. European Community proposals on the control of salmonella enteritidis are expected to include this treatment, as part of an alternative method of control involving the safe disposal of products from infected flocks rather than compulsory slaughter.

The salmonella control measures as a whole will be assessed further in the light of progress in the European Community discussions. It remains the Government's firm objective to secure Communitywide measures on salmonella which ensure that consumers are protected, whether consuming home produced or imported products, and that producers throughout the Community operate to the same high standards as in this country.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions poultry farms which have had flocks slaughtered due to salmonella infection have been reinfected, with consequent flock slaughter *(a)* once and *(b)* more than once.

Mr. Maclean: There have been eight instances where poultry have been compulsorily slaughtered, following previous compulsory slaughter on the same farm. In only two of these cases was the same strain of salmonella involved on both occasions. There have been no instances of slaughter being required more than twice on the same premises.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *485*, if he will make a statement on the negotiations for the adoption of comprehensive Community rules setting higher welfare standards for animals during all stages of transport.

Mr. Maclean: A Council working group meeting to discuss the Commission's proposals was held in February 1990 but there have been no subsequent negotiations.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *427-28*, on the value of the state earnings-related pension, he will give figures for each year from 1999 to 2029 on the same basis.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is given in the table. It is important to note that calculations of this nature can

provide only a hypothetical view of the distant future based, as they are, on unchanged assumptions about economic variables and policies.

The weekly amounts of additional pension payable on retirement on 6 April in the stated year are as follows:

Year of retirement	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(c)*
1999	38·50	94·25	134·25
2000	40·90	99·60	140·80
2001	43·20	104·95	147·30
2002	45·60	110·50	154·10
2003	48·20	116·35	161·15
2004	50·90	122·45	168·40
2005	53·80	128·85	175·95
2006	56·60	135·25	183·60
2007	59·55	141·95	191·45
2008	62·70	148·95	199·65
2009	66·00	156·20	208·10
2010	70·40	166·20	219·75
2011	75·10	176·85	232·20
2012	80·25	188·25	245·40
2013	85·60	200·10	259·25
2014	91·35	212·80	274·05
2015	97·60	226·30	289·75
2016	104·35	240·65	306·50
2017	111·40	255·75	324·05
2018	118·80	271·65	342·55
2019	127·05	288·75	362·45
2020	135·50	306·55	383·15
2021	144·80	325·75	405·45
2022	154·65	345·95	428·90
2023	165·05	367·30	453·65
2024	176·30	390·00	480·00
2025	188·20	414·00	507·75
2026	201·05	439·55	537·35
2027	214·65	466·55	568·55
2028	227·90	491·95	594·30
2029	241·80	518·15	621·20

(a) A person on half average earnings.
(b) A person on average earnings.
(c) A person earning at or above the upper earnings limit.

Notes: From 1990 onwards 5 per cent. prices and 6·5 per cent. earnings growth is assumed. Average earnings are those for all full-time workers on adult rates in all industries and services, excluding those affected by absence.

Disability Allowance

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the rate of disability allowance for each of the last 10 years and indicate when it is next due for review.

Miss Widdecombe: I understand the right hon. Member's question was intended to refer to the disability premium which was introduced in the income support and reformed housing benefit schemes in April 1988, in the community charge rebate scheme in April 1989 in Scotland, and in the community charge benefit scheme from April 1990. In common with other premiums, the disability premium is reviewed each year as part of the annual benefit uprating exercise. The rates of the premium, including the proposed rates for April 1991, are as follows:

	April 1988 £	*April 1989* £	*April 1990* £	[1]*April 1991* £
Rate for a single person	13·05	13·70	15·40	16·65
Rate for couples	18·60	19·50	22·10	23·90

[1]Proposed.

Since April 1990 the disabled child premium has been payable for each disabled child at the same rate as the disability premium for a single adult.

Children

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of children in Scotland dependent on supplementary benefit or income support in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1989.

Miss Widdecombe: The number of children under 16 years in families on supplementary benefit in 1979 was 109,000. The number of children under 16 years in families on income support in 1989 was 223,000.
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries for 1979 and 1989.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the number of sufferers from myalgic encephalomyelitis who have applied for *(a)* mobility allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance and *(c)* sickness benefits and have been refused because their illness is not recognised by the Department of Social Security in Scotland.

Mr. Scott: No myalegic encephalomyelitis sufferers in Scotland have been refused mobility allowance, attendance allowance or sickness benefits on the ground that their illness is not recognised.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had from sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis seeking his assistance in obtaining state benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: A number of representations have been made by, and on behalf of, people suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis about the general difficulties they face. We understand their concerns and continue to consider them sympathetically.

Care Homes (Residents' Leave)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what estimate he has made of the number of claimants in care homes who have lost benefit during leave periods through the incorrect interpretation of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulation, schedule 7 and paragraph 7(1)(a);

(2) when he intends to issue new guidelines to adjudication officers with regard to their interpretation of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations, schedule 7, paragraph 7(1)(a) concerning benefit payments to care home residents during leave periods.

Miss Widdecombe: No such estimate has been made. The regulation is clear in its intention and it is for the independent adjudication officer to determine the correct application in each case. We are looking at the implications of this regulation for people in certain circumstances in residential care and nursing homes.

Income Support

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the level of income support from April 1991 to ensure it does not fall below the rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: It has been reviewed. In his uprating statement of 24 October last year my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State, announced that income-related benefits, including income support, would rise by 8·1 per cent. from next April.

The uprating is based, as usual, on the RPI less housing costs. This is because, for those receiving income support, help with rent is available through housing benefit and help with mortgage interest is available separately within the income support scheme.

Fostering

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's payment to a local authority for children aged under five years in a foster home.

Mr. Jack: The Department makes no such payment. The maintenance of these children is covered by boarding out allowances paid by local authorities, which are met from the revenue support grant.

Coventry Cyrenians

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will propose changes to income support and social fund legislation following the cases raised with him by the letter from the Coventry Cyrenians, dated 14 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No. We are satisfied that current social security policy for homeless young people is correct. A copy of my reply to the Coventry Cyrenians has been sent to the hon. Member.

Benefit Expenditure

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the reduction from 97 per cent. to 95 per cent. of grant for housing benefit and poll tax benefit is still to be implemented; what will be the savings to the Exchequer; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The basic rate of direct subsidy for housing benefit and community charge benefit will be reduced from 97 per cent. to 95 per cent. from April 1991. Although this will result in a reduction in direct subsidy of some £86 million, the effect of this reduction was fully taken into account in drawing up the proposed local government financial settlements for 1991-92.

Claimants, Warwickshire

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest figures for Coventry and Warwickshire for how many people are dependent on *(a)* income support, *(b)* family credit and *(c)* housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is not available to show the number of people dependent on income support, family credit and housing benefit and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The latest available information for the number of claims to these benefits in Coventry and Warwickshire is as follows:

	Coventry	*Warwickshire*
Income support[1]	33,453	25,368
Family Credit[2]	1,522	3,331
Housing Benefit[3]	22,992	23,357

[1] Derived from 30 November 1990 count of 100 per cent. of cases in action which include a number where payment had ceased but other action was continuing.

[2] Number of families receiving Family Credit who, at the time their award was made, were living in Coventry or Warwickshire. These figures do not include awards made after 28 December 1990.

[3] Number of people receiving Housing Benefit on 31 August 1990.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

12. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial application British Rail has made for the provision of passenger and cargo facilities in Liverpool to ensure direct access to the channel tunnel rail system.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail proposes to have a terminal on Merseyside for international freight services. Passengers between Liverpool and the continent will need to change in London or at Crewe.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has met the chairman of British Rail to discuss rail links between Scotland and the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend last met Sir Bob Reid on 12 December when a number of issues, including channel tunnel services running north of London, were discussed.

21. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the environmental aspects of the proposed high-speed rail link.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail intends to publish a full environmental statement for its final preferred route, taking into account the representations received in the course of public consultations.

Transport Policy

13. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what role he envisages for the railway within transport policy.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's network is an important part of the transport system in this country. It will benefit from our policy of aiming to improve all forms of transport. Railways can make their contribution to a safer, more efficient and less environmentally damaging transport system. They will do this by providing a service that people choose to use on the grounds of convenience and cost.

Midland Main Line

14. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed the midland main line with the chairman of British Rail; whether he discussed possible improvements to the Leicester to St. Pancras section; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I welcome the improved service which British Rail now offers on the midland main line, and I am keeping in touch with British Rail about plans for possible further improvements.

Road Safety

15. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government intend to take additional measures to improve existing road and rail access to the channel tunnel from Wales and the west of England.

Mr. Freeman: The national roads programme includes major schemes to improve access from Wales and the west of England to the tunnel and channel ports. British Rail has announced investment of over £1·4 billion in tunnel-related improvements for freight and passenger services.

London Underground

16. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of London Underground track are currently in use for passenger services north of the River Thames, and how many are in use south of the River Thames.

Mr. Freeman: London Underground has 438 miles of track north of the Thames and 33 miles south of the Thames that are currently in use for passenger services.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether London Underground has sought any additional funding to cover the projected shortfall of £52 million in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: London Transport has requested additional funding this year. We are considering its request.

Public Transport (Hackney)

17. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to visit Hackney to discuss public transport.

Mr. Freeman: I discussed public transport matters with representatives of the London borough of Hackney when I visited Tower Hamlets on 27 September. I have no plans to visit Hackney at present; if the hon. Member has a specific concern, perhaps she could write to me.

London Regional Transport

20. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss performance targets.

Mr. Freeman: I meet the chairman of London Transport regularly to discuss a variety of issues, including performance targets.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in his consideration of the appointment of a chairman of London Regional Transport, he takes into account his ability to be financially competent and to manage senior staff to ensure their financial competence.

Mr. Freeman: Yes; my right hon. and learned Friend would take account of these and many other relevant factors.

Bathgate Station

22. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his predecessor's official visit to Bathgate railway station in November.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend was impressed by the success of the Edinburgh-Bathgate line since its re-opening to passenger services.

Dial-a-Ride

23. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he intends to respond to representations about the reorganisation of Dial-a-Ride in London.

Mr. Freeman: I am still considering representations received from my hon. Friend and others. I expect to give my hon. Friend a written answer shortly.

Rail Services (South-East)

24. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss extending the passenger service to towns in the south-east that are not yet linked into Network SouthEast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is a matter for British Rail to come forward with proposals for opening lines where there is a commercial case. I understand that Network SouthEast is currently consulting interested parties about various proposals for public transport in the Luton-Dunstable corridor.

Transport Supplementary Grant

25. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the criteria for payment of transport supplementary grant for road development.

Mr. Chope: The criteria for payment of transport supplementary grant to local highway authorities in support of their capital expenditure on highways and the regulation of traffic are set out in a local authority circular No. 1/90, a copy of which is in the Library. TSG in 1991-92 will be 17 per cent. higher than in 1990-91, and in addition £45 million TSG will be made available for work on bridges making a total of £318 million.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the transport supplementary grant settlement for Essex in the last two years.

Mr. Chope: Essex received £5·1 million net transport supplementary grant in 1989-90 and £6·7 million in 1990-91. In 1991-92 it will receive £6·4 million.

Parking (London)

26. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any recent discussions on the problems of parking in London.

Mr. Chope: Yes.

Airline Security

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent steps have been taken by his Department to tighten airline security in respect of the continuing dangers posed to British interests by the crisis in the middle east.

Mr. Rifkind: All practical and possible steps are being taken through British airlines and the Governments of

countries to which they fly, to tighten aviation security. We and other Governments have developed contingency plans for further measures in the event of hostilities. Aviation security is at an unprecedentedly high level. It would not be in the public interest to reveal details.

Vehicle Exhaust Pollution

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to reduce the level of vehicle exhaust pollution in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Our proposals to reduce vehicle exhaust pollution are not specific to London. We have participated actively in discussions within the EC about controls on vehicle emissions. I am pleased to say that following a decision in the EC Environment Council on 20 December 1990, strict new emission standards will apply to all new petrol driven cars from 31 December 1992 and as a result such cars will have to be fitted with catalytic convertors. We are now pressing for strict standards for gaseous and particulate emissions from goods vehicles and buses. In 1991, for the first time, we also propose to include an emissions check in the annual MOT test. Duty differentials in favour of unleaded petrol are encouraging its widespread use and it now accounts for almost 40 per cent. of all petrol sold in this country.

British Rail

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy in respect of the requirement for British Rail to publish an annual corporate plan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is no requirement for British Rail to publish an annual corporate plan. I understand that the chairman of British Rail aims to publish a longer term strategy document for the railway later this year.

Railway Accidents

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he published the report into the railway accident at Walton on the Naze in 1987; whether the contents of that report have been taken into account in respect of any later incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The railway inspectorate has not yet completed its report on the Walton on the Naze accident, partly because the inspecting officer was involved as an assessor to Sir Anthony Hidden's investigation into the Clapham junction accident, but it has already ensured that the lessons learned have been put into practice. The report will be published at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what requirements are made by his railway inspectorate concerning provision of hydraulic buffer stops or sand drags at frequently used terminal platforms.

Mr. Freeman: Her Majesty's railway inspectorate, which is now part of the Health and Safety Executive, has no requirement for railway operators to provide particular types of buffer stops at terminal stations. Buffer stops are generally designed to minimise injury to train passengers and damage to railway vehicles where impact is slight. If impact is made with greater force, the buffer stop should prevent a train overrunning onto the station concourse. I am advised that it would not be practicable to specify the impact loading that individual sets of buffer stops should withstand since most stations are used by a variety of rolling stock with different characteristics.

EC Regulations

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons Her Majesty's Government agreed at the European Council on 15 December 1990, that the Commission proposals on excise duties on fuel, taxes, tolls, etc., should be resolved by the Council on 30 June 1991; and if he will make a statement summarising the proposals submitted by the Commission on these matters.

Mr. Chope: These issues have been identified as among those to be addressed before completion of the internal market in 1992. The Commission proposals for the charging of transport infrastructure costs to heavy vehicles will be the subject of an explanatory memorandum to be laid before the House in the usual way.

Drivers (Health)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what medical advice is available to him on the health of drivers and motorcycle riders and on those in charge of the various forms of public transport for which he is responsible.

Mr. Chope: *[pursuant to his reply, 17 December 1990 c. 125]:* The health of railway employees is a matter for individual railway operators.

The statutory responsibility for the safety regulations of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. This includes the medical standards for the issue of appropriate flight crew and air traffic controller licences.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Occupational Health Services

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements exist for the provision of an occupational health service for employees within his Department, stating *(a)* how many staff are employed to provide occupational health services, *(b)* how many of those staff are qualified nurses and *(c)* how many employees work in his Department in total.

Mr. Hanley: For its home civil servants, the Northern Ireland Office has access to the services of the Civil Service occupational health service which employs some 100 fully qualified occupational health professionals and operates via a network of regional offices throughout the United Kingdom.

An occupational health service was established within the Northern Ireland Civil Service in 1988. Its primary responsibility is the occupational health care of all civil servants. At present there are three doctor posts, one nurse post and four administrative posts providing the occupational health services.

There are just under 28,600 employees in the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments combined.

Rural Development

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why he has decided not to publish the report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Rural Development which will soon be completed.

Mr. Hanley: The report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Rural Development will provide advice to Ministers on ways in which the delivery of the Government's social and economic policies in the most deprived rural areas of Northern Ireland might be improved. It would not be appropriate to publish internal advice of this nature.

However, I acknowledge the continuing interest of the hon. Gentleman and others in the work of the Committee and on receipt of its report I will be considering whether and in what form more detailed information about its work and conclusions might be released.

Moyle Hospital

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the length of waiting lists for patients seeking admission to Moyle hospital, Larne; and what is the average figure for similar hospital provision within Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Number on Waiting List at 30 September 1990

Specialty	*Moyle*	*Average of similar Hospital Provision*
General Surgery	148	138
Ear, Nose and Throat	142	[1]
Gynaecology	36	120

[1]Specialty not provided.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his Department's assessment of the cost-effectiveness of basic acute specialty provision for patients admitted to Moyle hospital, Larne.

Mr. Hanley: No such assessment has been made by the Department of Health and Social Services since this is a matter for the Northern health and social services board.

Acute Hospital Beds

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many acute hospital beds pro rata to its population each health board in Northern Ireland provides; and whether he will take steps to remove any inequality of provision.

Mr. Hanley: The figures requested are as follows:

HSS Board	*Available Acute Beds per 1,000 population (1989-90)*
Eastern	5·1
Northern	2·5
Southern	2·8
Western	2·7

The high level of provision in the Eastern board area reflects the inclusion of beds for regional medical services there. All hospitals often provide care to patients outside own board areas.

Health Policies (East Antrim)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to ensure that the Northern health and social services board implements the policies of Her Majesty's Government for the 1990s at Moyle hospital, Larne, and for the east Antrim area.

Mr. Hanley: Under the Government's proposals set out in "Working for Patients" responsibility for the provision of services to the population of Larne, and the East Antrim area falls to the Northern health and social services board. Implementation of the Government's policies by the Northern board will continue to be monitored through the annual accountability review process.

Housing Executive (Garages)

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the garages owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at the rear of Wellington avenue, Larne, have tenants; and what assessment has been made of the effect the present rent level charged by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for garages on incentives to car-owning tenants of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive properties to use garage space available.

Mr. Needham: The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that there are 19 garages owned by the Executive at the rear of Wellington avenue, Larne, seven of which are rented. The Executive has given consideration to the rent levels for garages and is satisfied that they are appropriate. No incentives are offered to Housing Executive tenants in respect of the rental of available garage space.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many garages are in the ownership of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in Northern Ireland; and for how many garages the Northern Ireland Housing Executive receives rental payments.

Mr. Needham: The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that the Executive owns 11,283 garages and rental payments are received for 7,185 of these garages.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many garages have been demolished by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: The chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that the number of garages demolished in each of the last three years is as follows:

	Number
1987-88	118
1988-89	77
1989-90	135

Primary School Pupils

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of primary school pupils in each education and library board area over the last ten years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers are as follows:

Year	Belfast	Western	North-Eastern	South-Eastern	Southern
1981	31,708	36,113	44,336	35,559	41,862
1982	30,491	35,609	42,645	34,882	41,111
1983	29,200	35,165	41,389	34,010	40,481
1984	28,825	35,015	40,725	34,183	40,310
1985	28,461	35,194	40,085	34,509	40,425
1986	28,509	35,254	39,788	34,672	40,519
1987	28,690	35,512	39,517	34,954	40,844
1988	29,158	35,541	39,390	34,935	41,098
1989	29,411	35,979	39,491	35,290	41,562
1990	29,988	36,212	39,687	35,516	41,877

School Inspectors

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many school inspectors have been employed by the Department of Education in each of the last five years; and what has been the cost of employing each of these inspectors in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Year	Number of inspectors	Total cost £
1986-87	53	2,004,822
1987-88	57	2,448,024
1988-89	57	2,432,807
1989-90	57	2,646,122
1990-91	60	[1]2,987,429

[1] Estimated.

Education and Library Boards (Administration)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on administration by each of the five education and library boards in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Education and Library Boards' Administration Expenditure

Year	Belfast £000s	North-Eastern £000s	South-Eastern £000s	Southern £000s	Western £000s	Total £000s
1985-86	4,328	3,796	3,580	3,574	3,427	18,705
1986-87	4,609	4,207	3,928	3,968	3,709	10,421
1987-88	4,994	4,606	4,360	4,509	4,118	22,587
1988-89	5,237	5,294	4,839	5,460	4,735	25,565
1989-90	5,898	6,056	5,651	6,250	5,445	29,300

Tobacco Industry

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of employed persons in the tobacco industry in the Province (i) at the latest date and (ii) five years ago.

Mr. Needham: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Housing

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of housing executive properties *(a)* demolished and *(b)* replaced in each of the polling wards in Belfast for each year including and since 1979.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has informed me that the information is not available in the form requested and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Pupil Costs

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the unit cost per pupil for each secondary school in each education and library board area.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Red Foxes

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for what reasons the Royal Ulster Constabulary require those engaged in the shooting of red foxes for control purposes to do so with .22 rimfire rifles.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has informed me that he does not require the use of .22 rimfire rifles for the shooting of red foxes.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to offer financial compensation to sheep farmers and game preservers for depredations by red foxes.

Mr. Hanley: There are no grounds for claiming compensation for loses due to a natural predator such as a fox.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who is responsible for firearms policy in Northern Ireland in relation to rimfire and centrefire rifles suitable for vermin destruction; and what is that policy in relation to requests for .22 centrefire rifles for fox control.

Dr. Mawhinney: Responsibility for firearms licensing policy rests with the chief constable of the Royal Ulster

Constabulary but, as appeals under the firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 are to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, the chief constable consults him from time to time on aspects of firearms policy.

As part of that policy, the chief constable would not normally authorise the use of .22 centrefire rifles for fox control.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland upon what expert evidence and research his policy in respect of the firearms to be used for controlling red foxes is based; and what representations he has had on this subject.

Dr. Mawhinney: The policy on firearms for controlling red foxes has developed over many years. From time to time expert advice has been sought from the Northern Ireland Departments of Agriculture and Environment as well as from the chief constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Most recently representations have been received from the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and the Joint Shooting Committee of Northern Ireland.

Fishing Quotas

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he will take to protect the fishing industry in Northern Ireland in connection with proposals being considered by the European Community involving the imposition of quotas on cod and whiting.

Mr. Hanley: The Commission's proposals for 1991 total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas were considered at the Fisheries Council held on 19 and 20 December. Ministerial colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office represented the United Kingdom at Council and were fully briefed, by a senior Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland official who accompanied them, on the importance of Irish sea cod and whiting (and other important stocks) to the Northern Ireland fishing industry. At Council they were successful in achieving increases in the Commission's original proposals from 6,000 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes in the cod TAC and from 6,400 tonnes to 10,000 tonnes in the whiting TAC which gave the United Kingdom 1991 quotas of 3,355 tonnes for cod and 3,865 tonnes for whiting. In addition quota swaps of 410 tonnes of cod and 320 tonnes of whiting from other member states have been agreed. This outcome represents a reasonable balance between the more immediate requirements of fishermen and the need to conserve stocks in the longer term interests of the industry.

School Traffic Patrols

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the vacancies for school traffic patrols in Northern Ireland, by education board.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 20 December 1991]:* The numbers of vacancies at 1 December 1990 for school traffic patrols in Northern Ireland, by education board were as follows:

	Number
Belfast Education and Library Board	4
North-Eastern Education and Library Board	2
South-Eastern Education and Library Board	1
Southern Education and Library Board	0
Western Education and Library Board	4

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether training and enterprise councils are public bodies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) are private companies operating under a performance contract with my Department. A network of 82 TECs in England and Wales is now in place, with 46 TECs already operational and the remainder in development. The full network will be operational in the summer, some two years ahead of schedule.

EC Support Framework

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the full amount of assistance received from the Commission of the European Community for the 1990 allocation support framework for operational programmes 3 and 4.

Mr. Forth: The full amount of assistance approved to date by the European Commission for operational programmes under objectives 3 and 4 in 1990 is £229,229,551. Under the fund's rules, the Commission actually releases the money in the three stages.

The first advance of £114·6 million was received last October. My Department applied for the second advance at the earliest opportunity allowed by the fund, and payment from the Commission is expected by the end of January. My Department will similarly submit the final claim as quickly as possible.

Association of Accounting Technicians

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the work of the Association of Accounting Technicians to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Howard: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the Authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 28 January 1991 to 1 February 1991.

European Social Charter

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for what reasons Her Majesty's Government agreed at the European Council on 15 December 1990, to press ahead more actively with the action programme for the implementation of the social charter; and if he will make a statement summerising the proposals of this action programme.

Mr. Forth: The conclusions of the European Council on 15 December 1990 on the social action programme apply in particular to health and safety. The Council took the

view that proposals on health and safety at work should be adopted without delay. The Government fully support this view. We have always made clear that we were prepared to accept the health and safety aspects of the social action programme.

As to the other proposals in the social action programme, the European Council asked that in speeding up proceedings, the Community should start with the matters on which rapid progress was possible. The Council set out quite clearly that they should meet the three criteria of creating and developing employment, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and respect for the diversity of tradition and custom across the Community.

The United Kingdom has consistently advocated these principles during negotiations on the social action programme and will support proposals which satisfy these criteria.

The European Commission's social action programme covers a wide range of proposals in the labour and social field. The proposals were summarised in the explanatory memoranda submitted by the Department of Employment on 6 January 1990 and 15 March 1990 (numbers 9978-89 and 9778-89).

Disability

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what grants are available to employers to enable handicapped people to operate machinery.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

HEALTH

Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the percentage for the latest year available for the number of certificates concerning abortions lodged late with his Department in breach of the regulations governing the Abortion Act 1967; and if he will give the percentage of these cases in which his Department took action, broken down by the form of action taken.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1989, 54 per cent. of the notification forms (HSA4) sent to the chief medical officer for abortions performed in England and Wales were received more than seven days after the date of termination. The great majority of notifications are received within 28 days. Follow up action was taken by letter in respect of 150 notifications (0·15 per cent.) where no reasonable explanation for the delay was received. We shall continue to remind doctors about the time limit and the penalty for failure to comply with it.

Marriage Guidance

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his policy on the employment of counsellors in group general practices to deal with marriage guidance.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Employment of such staff by practices is a matter for GPs themselves to decide in the light of the needs of their patients and of the circumstances of their practices.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a list of regional health authorities showing how many patients in each had been waiting *(a)* for one year and *(b)* for two years for operations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is given in the table. For England as a whole the number of in-patients waiting over a year for operations has fallen by 17,086 (9 per cent.) and for those waiting over two years by 10,737 (14 per cent.) in the 12 months to March 1990. Since March 1979 the number of patients treated has increased by 24·9 per cent.

Waiting list for in-patient surgical acute treatment at 31 March 1990—England

RHA	*Total*[1]	*Over 1 year*	*Over 2 years*
Northern	31,912	6,931	2,536
Yorkshire	41,898	7,827	2,667
Trent	50,216	10,440	3,386
East Anglian	29,967	7,587	2,960
North West Thames	40,701	11,876	5,339
North East Thames	60,146	21,146	10,404
South East Thames	53,551	17,196	8,320
South West Thames	34,827	11,610	4,244
Wessex	37,645	9,450	3,591
Oxford	29,325	8,457	3,107
South Western	43,666	11,838	4,398
West Midlands	61,883	16,264	6,507
Mersey	22,605	2,329	16
North Western	57,321	19,718	5,485
Special HAs	7,389	1,891	590
England (total)	603,052	164,560	63,550

Source: KHO6, KHO7, KHO7A.
[1] Figures relate to those waiting less self-deferred cases.

Hearing Aids

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the waiting times for hearing aids in the Trent regional health authority; and what steps are being taken to substantially reduce the waiting time for those seeking hearing aids.

Mr. Dorrell: The information about waiting times is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to Sir Michael Carlisle, the chairman of Trent regional health authority for this information. My hon. Friend will welcome the Department's commitment to fund 12 pilot projects aimed at reducing waiting times for hearing aid services. Two hospitals in the Trent region are participating in this initiative. Also, Leicestershire health authority has received £50,000 from the waiting list fund in 1990-91 specifically for hearing aid services. This is expected to treat an additional 1,000 outpatients.

Fostering

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will order an inquiry into the circumstances of a coloured child removed from white foster parents by Lancashire county council; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will review the guidelines for transracial adoptions, so as to avoid the removal of children from foster parents of different racial origin to their children; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: All directors of social services in England on 29 January 1990 received guidance on the issues of race and culture in the placement of children for fostering and adoption. It makes clear that usually placements with a family of similar ethnic origin and religion will be most likely to meet a child's needs and safeguard his or her welfare. In some cases, however, placement with a family of a different ethnic origin may be the best choice for a particular child. All factors relevant to a child's welfare should be considered when decisions are made. Copies of the guidance (CI(90)2), which is still current, have been placed in the Library.

The social services inspectorate has made inquiries into the case in question. It has been assured that in reaching its decision to remove the child and place him for adoption with another white family, Lancashire county council gave first consideration to the child's welfare. The ethnic origins of the child were considered but were not the principal reason for the removal.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are estimated to be taking benzodiazepines on a long-term basis.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no such estimates held centrally.

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he has carried out any research into the efficiency and comparative cost of Temazepam Planpak, in aiding the withdrawal of patients from benzodiazepines;

(2) what withdrawal strategies are referred to by the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs in its reference to all clinical needs in respect of withdrawal from benzodiazepines being able to be met equally effectively and at less cost by standard products in the contect of less rigid, individually structured withdrawal programmes.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department has not funded research into the use of Temazepam Planpak, but is aware that some research has been carried out. Guidance on benzodiazepine withdrawal strategies is provided in part 4.1 of the British National Formulary. A suggested protocol for patients unable to reduce dosage using their existing drug is to transfer to diazepam, and then to reduce dosage gradually. Diazepam is available in low-dosage tablets, and allows withdrawal to be tailored flexibly to the needs of individual patients. It is also significantly less expensive than Temazepam Planpak.

Temazepam

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the general availability of a gel-filled form of tablets and on their producers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to temazepam gel-filled capsules, which are marketed by several different pharmaceutical companies. Temazepam is also available in tablet form. As medicines, all marketed forms of temazepam require licences under the Medicines Act 1968. Manufacturers of temazepam capsules and tablets have provided sufficient information to the Medicines Control Agency to satisfy the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what were the reasons behind the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs refusal to allow any increase in price to recover the costs incurred in the development of Temazepam gel-filled capsules for the prevention of drug abuse; and why they have proposed that the benefit of brand-name prescribing should not be available to their originator;

(2) what is his policy on financial recognition of the cost of research and development by the pharmaceutical industry of products in categories covered by the limited list.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: One of the principles underlying the operation of the selected list scheme since its introduction in 1985 has been that, in order to achieve maximum economy, the drugs retained for NHS prescription should where possible be specified and prescribed by a non-proprietary name. The recent recommendation of the Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs that temazepam capsules should not be prescribable by the relatively new proprietary name Gelthix, but only by the non-proprietary name, is in accordance with this principle.

Interleukin II

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether all patients receiving chemotherapy cancer treatment at a self-governing trust hospital or a directly managed hospital, will have the drug Interleukin II available to them it if is prescribed by the senior medical doctor in charge of their treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Interleukin II is not licensed under the Medicines Act for general use in this country but, at a doctor's discretion may be recommended on a specific named patient basis or for a patient as part of a clinical trial.

Child Abuse

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent his Department collects and collates statistics from local authority social services departments covering child abuse cases referred to them, including such detail as mode of referral and nature of abuse; whether he has plans to institute the compilation and production of such statistics; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information collected centrally about child abuse relates to the number of children and young persons on child protection registers and the number of names added to and removed from the registers. The most recent information relates to the year ending 31 March 1990. This is published in the provisional feedback "Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers England 1990" and is available in the Library.

Information is not collected centrally about the number of child abuse case referrals and there are no plans to institute collection of such statistics.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will break down the total numbers of deaths caused by breast cancer in England and Wales for each

year since 1979 into ages 16 to 24 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years, and 65 years and over.

Mr. Dorrell: The number of deaths from underlying cause of breast cancer by sex in each of the age groups 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+ in England and Wales from 1979 to 1989 is as follows:

Year and Sex	*All ages*	*15-24*	*25-34*	*35-44*	*45-54*	*55-64*	*65+*
1979							
Males[1]	83	—	1	4	12	20	46
Females[1]	12,091	2	161	653	1,812	2,799	6,664
1980							
Males	78	—	—	—	6	19	53
Females	12,167	2	136	679	1,873	2,802	6,675
1981							
Males	84	—	—	3	8	10	63
Females	12,513	3	158	679	1,863	2,886	6,924
1982							
Males	87	—	—	1	7	20	59
Females	12,405	6	142	694	1,841	2,862	6,860
1983							
Males	87	—	1	1	4	19	62
Females	12,672	3	127	688	1,783	2,948	7,123
1984							
Males	99	—	—	5	7	21	66
Females	13,310	6	143	708	1,779	3,010	7,664
1985							
Males	79	—	—	1	7	10	61
Females	13,513	5	126	722	1,669	3,073	7,918
1986							
Males	105	1	—	4	4	28	68
Females	13,641	6	136	742	1,792	2,866	8,099
1987							
Males	89	—	—	5	2	15	67
Females	13,751	3	148	715	1,724	2,838	8,323
1988							
Males	73	—	—	1	3	13	56
Females	13,723	5	141	816	1,684	2,726	8,351
1989							
Males	76	—	—	—	10	10	56
Females	14,008	5	137	817	1,742	2,690	8,617

[1] International Classification of Disease Code 9th revision.
174 malignant neoplasm of female breast.
175 malignant neoplasm of male breast.

Hospitals

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines he has issued to general practitioners about the degree of freedom they have to refer patients to whichever hospital they, or their patient, choose, whether the hospital is directly managed or a national health service trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: GPs will have the same freedom as now to refer patients to the hospital of their choice for the appropriate treatment. A key advantage of the NHS reforms will be improved arrangements to give practical effect to this freedom.

"Contracts for Health Services: Operational Principles"—a copy of which is in the Library—provides guidance to health authorities. It emphasises the need to consult GPs on their preferred patterns of referral.

AIDS

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to his written reply of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *364-65*, to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman), when he will publish further details of the proposed settlement of the dispute between the Government and people with haemophilia who were infected with the AIDS virus by contaminated blood products supplied by the national health service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The detailed provisions of the proposed settlement are under discussion with the lawyers representing the plaintiffs. It would be inappropriate to publish further details until all plaintiffs and the court have had an opportunity to consider the full terms of the settlement and to approve them.

Neurosciences

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he knew to be the cost of moving neurosciences from Shooters hill to Denmark hill when he announced approval for the proposal in 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 27 November 1990 at c. *363*.

Chiropractic

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to the experience of Denmark in the provision of chiropractic within its national health service; and if he will make it his policy to include this discipline in the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are aware that in Denmark chiropractic is available under the state health scheme. However, all medical treatment under the NHS must, by law, be given or presented by a registered medical practitioner or by certain state registered professions who practice in their own right. There are no plans to change that long established principle.

NHS Staff (Conscription)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of NHS staff, broken down into doctors, nurses, ancillary staff, etc., who would be liable were the call-up of reserve forces to become compulsory; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Mylograms

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will estimate, region by region, the number of patients who were given a mylogram procedure with the use of myodil contrast medium, and who have subsequently requested from their district health authority full details and confirmation that the myodil contrast medium was administered; how many of the total number of those requesting information and confirmation have been provided with the information as requested; and how many requests are outstanding.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to advise district health authorities that they should allow no more than three months when dealing with individual requests from patients seeking confirmation that they were subjected to a myodil contrast medium.

Mr. Dorrell: We have not issued any guidelines as to the timescale within which health authorities should process requests for access to personal medical records. We have, however, encouraged them to deal with such requests as quickly as possible.

Management Consultants

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each district health authority, Scottish health authority, regional health authority and England as a whole the amount spent on management consultants' fees during each of the last three years.

Mr. Dorrell: The employment of management consultants is a matter for individual health authorities in England and information on any expenditure incurred is not collected centrally.

Questions concerning Scottish health authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Soviet Union

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any proposals to assist the USSR to overcome the current shortage of anti-cancer drugs.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The United Kingdom has not received any specific requests for unilateral aid from the USSR, but is participating in the programme of European Community humanitarian aid to the USSR agreed at the European Council in December 1990. This aid will include medical supplies and some 250 tonnes have been despatched. We do not have details of the contents of these consignments.

Food Safety

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when part II of the report of the Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food will be published.

Mr. Dorrell: Sir Mark Richmond submitted part II of his Committee's report to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It is being published today.

In this, the final part, the Committee has examined arrangements in Scotland and Northern Ireland for red meat production, milk and milk products, fish and shellfish, transport, retailing and wholesaling, catering, the consumer and the home, education and training, and research. Part II together with part I, surveys authoritatively a wide range of microbiological safety issues and recommends technical, scientific, legal and educational measures to reduce the risk of microbiological food poisoning. In this context my colleagues and I welcome the report as a useful and constructive document. It makes many useful recommendations which we shall follow up in a positive way; and as with part I of the Committee's report, we trust that others to whom the recommendations are addressed, in particular the food industry and environmental health authorities, will similarly examine it to see how the level of food safety in this country can be further improved. We shall certainly draw it to the attention of interested bodies.

As with part I of the Committee's report, the Government have decided to publish its immediate response to the Committee's recommendations. This is set out in a paper which is being put into the Libraries.

The Government and I are most grateful to the Committee for the hard work it has put into producing both parts of the report.

The report is addressed to the Secretary of State for Health, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Secretary of State for Wales and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Nurses

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the average number of nurses employed by Norwich health authority who attended training courses in each of the last 12 months for which figures are available;

(2) what was the average number of *(a)* holidays and *(b)* sickness days taken by nurses employed by Norwich health authority, in each of the years 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Mr. Michael Falcon the chairman of Norwich health authority for details.

Adoption

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the date when he will issue the discussion paper on the review of inter-country adoption law; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We intend to issue the discussion paper on inter-country adoption, which will be a paper in the Adoption Law Review series, by Easter.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what he expects the effect on the recently negotiated reduction in junior doctors' hours of the call-up for Gulf or other military service of reserve medical personnel to be; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The agreement on junior doctors' hours sets out a programme of action to be implemented over the next year and beyond. It is not therefore anticipated that the call-up for military service of reserve medical personnel will have a measurable effect on this programme.

Disabled People

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria, relating to people with disabilities, will be used in the formula for calculating payments made to social service authorities for services under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[holding answer 20 December 1990]:* A major element of Government grants to local authorities is the revenue support grant, which is distributed using standard spending assessments (SSAs). These take account of each authority's social, demographic and economic characteristics, and the functions for which it is responsible. However, revenue support grant is unhypothecated and it is for local authorities to determine their own priorities.

Separate components are included in the personal social services SSA for services to people over 65 years old, to children, and to clients aged under 65 including mentally ill, mentally handicapped and physically handicapped people. Details of the criteria involved are given in "Standard Spending Assessments, Background and Underlying Methodology" published by the Department of the Environment in 1990 and available in the Library. When data from the 1991 census become available the use of a new indicator relating to long standing illness or disabilities will be considered.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which National Health Service trusts he intends to establish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[pursuant to his reply, 4 December 1990, c. 77-82]:* I am pleased to announce that I have agreed that a further 12 units who have expressed interest in trust status can proceed to work up applications to become trusts on 1 April 1992. This brings the total number of units working on second wave trust status to 123. The 12 units are:

Kendal Hospitals Unit
Eastbourne Acute Services
Parkside Community Services
Staffordshire Ambulance Services
Waltham Forest Health Services
Frenchay Acute and Community Services
Southmead Acute and Community Services
Royal United Hospital Bath
East Berkshire Mental Handicap Unit
Dudley Priority Unit
Liverpool Community, Mental Illness and Mental Handicap Services
Mersey Metropolitan Ambulance Service

Acute Beds

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all those National Health Service general hospitals by district and region which have less than 400 acute beds, giving the actual number of beds in each case.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 4 December 1990]:* I am arranging for the table containing available information to be placed in the Library. It is not possible from central returns to identify district general hospitals separately. The tables provided list hospitals with over 50 and less than 400 beds excluding those hospitals where more than 50 per cent. of the total beds are maternity beds or beds in units of the young disabled.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the National Health Service hospitals, by region and district, which provide accident and emergency services, together with, in each case *(a)* the number of acute beds in the hospital, *(b)* the total number of beds in the hospital and *(c)* a list of those services normally found in a district general hospital which are not available in that particular hospital.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 4 December 1990]:* I am arranging for the table containing available information to be placed in the Library. The accident and emergency facilities concerned will range from simple first aid stations to departments providing the full range of accident and emergency services. No central record is held of the services available in each hospital.

SCOTLAND

Community Care

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will meet the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations to discuss availability of funding for voluntary organisations involved in community care and other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Officials met representatives of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations on 15 November 1990 to discuss the role of the voluntary sector in the provision of community care services and a further meeting will be held in January 1991. Officials are always happy to meet the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations on matters of concern to voluntary organisations. As far as funding is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 15 October 1990.

Pensioners' Electricity Charges

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Scottish Old Age Pensioners' Association for the abolition of electricity standing charges for pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Representations are received annually from the Scottish Old Age Pensioners Association on a range of topics, including the abolition of electricity standing charges. Electricity prices are determined by the public electricity suppliers, subject to the conditions on price control set out in the licences issued to them under the Electricity Act 1989. Compliance by the public electricity suppliers with those conditions and all other conditions of their licences is overseen by the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Health Board Chairmen

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the chairmen of each health board in Scotland including their political affiliations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 26 January 1989 to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) at columns *718-19*, which contains as much information as is held centrally about the political affiliations of health board chairmen.

Interest Rates

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those European countries which have a lower rate of inflation than Scotland; and if he will give details of the interest rates in each of the countries listed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: There is no official retail prices index (RPI) for Scotland. The table lists those European Community member states which in November 1990 had a lower inflation rate than the United Kingdom's 9·7 per cent. together with their respective average November 1990 short-term interest rates.

EC member state	*Inflation*[1]	*Interest rates*[2]
Denmark	2·2	n/a
Ireland	2·7	n/a
Netherlands	2·8	8·7
West Germany	3·0	8·8
France	3·6	10·0
Belgium	4·0	9·0
Luxembourg	4·5	n/a
Italy	6·5	12·6
Spain	6·7	14·1

[1] Percentage change on a year earlier.
[2] Nominal three-month inter-bank rates.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding he proposes to give the M E Association and the M E Action Campaign organisations, to assist them in assisting Scottish sufferers of this illness.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The M E Association is receiving grant assistance of £14,668 towards its core headquarters running costs in the current year. Its application for funding in the financial year 1991-92 is still under consideration. I have received no application for funding from the M E Action Campaign organisations.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet with representatives of the M E Association and the M E Action Campaign to discuss how best to assist sufferers in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My officials are in contact with the M E Association as part of the arrangements for monitoring grant aid awarded under section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Fishing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sanction he expects to enforce against those Scottish fishermen who exceeded their quota in any species during 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: As part of the normal arrangements for distributing internally the United Kingdom's quotas it has been agreed with the United Kingdom industry that those groups disadvantaged as a result of any other group exceeding its quota in one year will be compensated in the subsequent year with correspondingly increased quotas. These arrangements will apply to all groups which are disadvantaged irrespective of where they are based in the United Kingdom. If an individual fisherman exceeds his monthly quota then, in cases where the quota in question is managed by Fisheries Departments, a report would be made to the procurator fiscal with a view to prosecution in the courts; if the quota is managed by a producer organisation, the fisherman is subject to the discipline procedures of the organisation.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions he has exercised his powers under section 1(8) of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976; and how, following the making of a protection order, he monitors its operation to ensure the improvement of, or the giving or availability of access of, fishings under a protection order in comparison with the proposals submitted to him in terms of section 1(3)(a) of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend has no powers under section 1(8) of the 1976 Act. Responsibility for all public prosecution in Scotland rests with the Lord Advocate.

Proposers of protection orders are encouraged to set up liaison committees. Regular reports on the operation of the protection orders are sought from each liaison committee. In addition, my right hon. Friend takes into account the views of the Consultative Committee on Freshwater Fisheries and complaints or other comments by angling clubs, associations and members of the public.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy of monitoring fish landings at Scottish ports and inquiring into allegations of misreporting concerning Scottish fishing vessels during 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Landings at each of 20 major fishing ports in Scotland are monitored daily by staff of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department. Landings at other ports are monitored periodically. Confirmation of reported areas of fishing activity is sought by comparing log book entries with surveillance data provided by fishery protection vessels and aircraft. All suspected cases of misreporting are investigated thoroughly and where sufficient evidence is available, cases are submitted to the prosecuting authorities.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since inception all those protection orders made under the provisions of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976; and the body which the Secretary of State has consulted under section 1(3)(b) of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976 in the case of each such protection order made.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

1976-79: None.
1980: The Rivers Tweed and Eye Protection Order 1980 (renewed in 1983, 1986 and 1988).
1981: None.
1982: The Upper Spey and Associated Waters Protection Order 1982 (renewed in 1985 and 1988).
1983: The River Tummel Catchment Area Protection Order 1983 (renewed in 1986 and 1988).
The River Lunan Catchment Area Protection Order 1983 (renewed in 1986 and 1988).
1984 and 1985: None.
1986: The River Tay Catchment Area Protection Order 1986 (renewed in 1990).

1988: The West Strathclyde Protection Order 1988.
1989: None.
1990: The River Earn Catchment Area Protection Order 1990.
The River Don Catchment Area (Part) Protection Order 1990.

My right hon. Friend has appointed a Consultative Committee on Freshwater Fisheries which is consulted under section 1(3)(b) of the 1976 Act on proposals for, and other matters relating to, protection orders.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the question of access to salmon fishings in Scotland; and whether he will include a comparative study of access to fishing in Scotland with other countries such as the Republic of Ireland and France with respect to European Community law.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have no plans to review the question of access to salmon fishings in Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those protection orders which have been varied or revoked by the Secretary of State under section 1(10) of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will identify the destination of all payments made by the Secretary of State under section 5 of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such payments have been made.

Fishing (Protection Orders)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those proposals for a protection order under the provisions of the Freshwater and Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1976 presently under consideration by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Two proposals are presently under consideration, one for Loch Awe, Loch Avich and the River Avich and the other for Loch Morar and the River Morar.

Acute Medical Services

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects to announce his decision on the Lanarkshire health board's proposals to eliminate acute medical services in Clydesdale constituency; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the projected figure for closure of acute medical services for each year from 1991 to 1994 in each health board area in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health boards are responsible for drawing up strategic plans for all services, including acute services. These plans may contain proposals for closures as well as for new capital investment. As strategy reviews are undertaken on a continuing basis by individual boards, it is not possible to give a full indication of new acute services developments and any consequent closures for the years 1991-1994. Lanarkshire health board is currently preparing an approval in principle submission for its acute services proposals. When this is received, I shall consider all aspects of the proposals, including the representations made by the hon. Member.

Industrial Investment

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the percentage increase in investment each year in Scotland since 1979 in real terms in *(a)* chemicals, *(b)* man-made fibres, *(c)* textiles, *(d)* clothing, *(e)* footwear and *(f)* motor vehicle manufacturing; to what extent this has resulted in an increase in capacity; what has been the increase in the demand for such goods; and whether he will publish in each case the increase in capacity since 1979, the increase in output as a percentage of 1979 and the figures for import penetration from the EEC and the rest of the world now and in 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not available in the form requested.

Net capital expenditure at current prices is available from the annual census of production. The figures are set out in the table.

Net Capital Expenditure in Scotland (£ million)

Year	*Chemicals*	*Man-made Fibres*	*Textiles*	*Leather*	*Footwear and Clothing*	*Motor Vehicles*
1979	n.a.	n.a.	21·7	1·0	9·1	17·2
1980	n.a.	n.a.	15·4	0·9	9·2	16·9
1981	n.a.	n.a.	12·3	0·6	8·1	7·4
1982	n.a.	n.a.	13·4	0·3	7·0	10·6
1983	n.a.	n.a.	13·2	0·6	9·1	6·8
1984	n.a.	n.a.	18·0	1·0	10·2	3·7
1985	n.a.	n.a.	29·8	1·2	14·2	14·6
1986	n.a.	n.a.	30·7	0·8	10·5	9·0
1987	n.a.	n.a.	31·8	1·3	13·8	2·9
1988[1]	n.a.	n.a.	33·9	3·2	18·0	8·2

Source: Annual census of production.

[1] The definition of net capital expenditure changed between 1987 and 1988. Up to 1987, contributors were asked to include annual payments for assets acquired on a financial leasing basis. From 1988, they were asked to include the total value of such assets as capital expenditure during the year in which they were acquired. This change is estimated to have increased total net capital expenditure for the United Kingdom as a whole by up to 7 per cent.

Figures are not available for demand or capacity.

Output figures in real terms are published regularly in indexed form. The following table gives an index of production series for the sectors required, at published level, scaled to 1979 = 100.

Index of industrial output in Scotland (1979 = 100)

	Chemicals and man-made fibres	*Textiles, leather, footwear and clothing*	*Motor vehicles*
1979	100·0	100·0	100·0
1980	91·1	89·1	100·9
1981	88·1	83·2	83·3
1982	88·9	77·1	81·6
1983	96·6	78·0	95·7
1984	97·6	86·3	110·9
1985	100·8	95·8	113·4
1986	104·8	92·6	125·9
1987	102·4	98·2	143·8
1988	103·9	102·7	160·7
1989	105·1	99·6	173·8

Source: Index of industrial production and construction—Scotland.

Figures for import penetration are unavailable.

Health Board Managers

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the salaries paid to each of the Scottish health boards' managers; their projected salary increase for next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The salary ranges for Scottish Health Board General Managers effective from 1 September 1990 are set out in the table. Progression up the range is dependent on individual performance. No decisions on the salary ranges from 1 September 1991 have yet been taken.

Health board	*Range*
Argyll and Clyde	£46,660 to £60,650
Ayrshire and Arran	£45,570 to £59,240
Borders	£42,750 to £55,570
CSA	£45,570 to £59,240
Dumfries and Galloway	£42,750 to £55,570
Fife	£45,570 to £59,240
Forth Valley	£45,570 to £59,240
Grampian	£47,200 to £61,360
Greater Glasgow	£53,710 to £69,820
Highland	£45,570 to £59,240
Lanarkshire	£46,660 to £60,650
Lothian	£51,270 to £66,650
Orkney	£33,640 to £43,730
Shetland	£33,640 to £43,730
Tayside	£47,200 to £61,360
Western Isles	£33,640 to £43,730

Labour Statistics

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the change in *(a)* the number of employees in employment and *(b)* the number of employees in employment in manufacturing in Scotland between June 1979 and June 1990; and what the changes are in percentage terms.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of employees in employment in Scotland fell by 102,000 between June 1979 and June 1990, a decrease of 5 per cent. The number of manufacturing employees in employment in Scotland fell by 180,000 between June 1979 and June 1990, a decrease of 30 per cent. Although the number of employees in employment in Scotland fell between 1979 and 1990, other components of the labour force have grown, notably self-employed which have increased by 87,000. At over 2·3 million, the civilian work force in Scotland is at its highest ever level.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of unemployed in Scotland in December 1979 and 1989.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The seasonally adjusted series of unemployment provides the only figures that are comparable over the time period requested. In December 1989, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployed claimants in Scotland was 211,200 compared with 141,500 in December 1979.

General Practice

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the numbers both in absolute and percentage terms of general practitioners in Greater Glasgow health board who have a negative balance in their practice profile;

(2) if he will give the current expenditure by Greater Glasgow health board on reimbursement of general practitioners for ancillary staff and the projected expenditure following the introduction of practice profiles;

(3) if he will give the basis on which the practice profile is calculated in determining staff reimbursement cost for general practitioners in the Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Greater Glasgow health board's allocation for the financial year ending 31 March 1991 in respect of general practitioners' ancillary staff is £7,073,000. The board has indicated in returns to the management executive that it has spent £3,610,180 to October, the latest month for which figures are available. The distrubution of these funds to individual practices, and the management of the ancillary staff scheme, are matters for Greater Glasgow health board, within the terms of the state of fees and allowances.

Asthma

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations his Department has received from Action Asthma about its work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have obtained a copy of the Action Asthma press information pack which launched the national asthma survey on 3 September 1990. I shall be interested to learn of the outcome of the survey in due course.

Cardiac Surgery

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many open heart operations have been undertaken this year in Scotland; how many people are on waiting lists waiting for open heart operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 2,969 cardiac procedures were undertaken in Scotland between 1 October 1989 and 30 September 1990. There were 1,268 people in Scotland waiting for cardiac operations at 30

September 1990. Cardiac surgery services have been systematically expanded by the Government over recent years. Since central funding began in 1983, the number of cardiac operations performed in Scotland has increased from 1,717 to 2,518 by March 1990. This year an extra £467,000 has been provided to Greater Glasgow health board under the waiting list fund initiative to enable an additional 80 procedures to be undertaken.

Community Charge

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all categories of people who are exempt from the community charge in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The categories of persons exempted from the personal community charge in Scotland are set out in schedule 1A to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987, as amended.

Migration

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the net civilian outmigration from Scotland in the 12 months ending June.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not yet available. It is planned that it will be published, together with the registrar-general's 1990 mid-year population estimates for Scotland, at the end of April 1991.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hill farmers there are in Scotland on a county by county basis for the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department does not collect information directly on the numbers of hill farmers in Scotland but does collect data on the numbers of holdings within the less favoured areas, which include the main hill areas. The holdings information, including an estimate for minor holdings, at June 1990 is as shown in the table.

Estimated number of holdings within less favoured areas

Region	*Estimated number*
Borders	1,200
Central	1,080
Dumfries and Galloway	3,580
Fife	150
Grampian	5,100
Highland	8,670
Lothian	420
Strathclyde	6,350
Tayside	1,270
Orkney	2,170
Shetland	2,650
Western Isles	5,970

Schools

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the level of expenditure on books and equipment per child in Scotland in constant prices, in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is given in the table, which has been compiled from local authority financial returns. Expenditure on equipment was not separately identified in these returns until 1982-83. There has been some variation from year to year in recording expenditure under the respective headings and the figures for expenditure on books may include some expenditure on equipment and vice versa.

Expenditure per pupil on text and library books and on educational tools, equipment and materials adjusted to 1989-90 prices using the GDP deflator

Year	*Books (£)*	*Equipment (£)*
1978-79	14·14	n/a
1979-80	14·44	n/a
1980-81	12·37	n/a
1981-82	12·22	n/a
1982-83	12·03	24·90
1983-84	15·13	21·92
1984-85	14·98	24·92
1985-86	13·55	23·11
1986-87	16·01	24·47
1987-88	12·16	29·82
1988-89	15·07	30·91

West Lothian Hospital

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects phase II of the West Lothian district general hospital to be completed; and if he will list the medical services which will be provided in it.

Mr. Lang: The building work of phase II of the West Lothian district general hospital will be completed by this summer and will be commissioned ready for patient use by April 1992.

Present plans are to provide the following medical services:

General surgery
Orthopaedic surgery
ENT surgery
General medicine
Paediatric medicine
Gynaecology
Obstetrics
Special care baby unit
Intensive therapy unit
Coronary care unit
Plastic surgery and burns unit
Geriatric assessment
Geriatric long stay
Acute psychiatry
Psychogeriatric
General practitioner unit
Young chronic sick unit

Sandeels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in identifying the cause of poor recruitment of sandeels in research into the Shetland sandeel population; and what evidence there is that this is due to natural factors operating in the first few months of life.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since poor recruitment to the Shetland sandeel population first occurred during a period of high spawning stock, it cannot be attributed to low egg production and must be the result of natural factors operating in the first few months of life. A research programme has been initiated to investigate the factors affecting the mortality and dispersal of larval and 0-group sandeels and the results of the first phase are currently being analysed.

The seas around Shetland are known to comprise part of an hydrographic system which can greatly influence the larval dynamics for those fish species where adequate studies have been made—for example, herring. Studies have suggested that sandeel larval abundance in that area can be affected by changing hydrographic circumstances. In addition, studies in the north- west Atlantic suggest that where stocks of pelagic predators such as herring and mackerel were reduced then there was a congruent increase in the abundance of larval sandeels. Conversely, in the north-east Atlantic herring numbers have increased dramatically in the last decade. Herring are capable of being voracious predators of sandeel larvae and the overlapping distribution of the two stocks around Shetland may be relevant to sandeel recruitment dynamics.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the distribution and abundance of 0-group, 1-group and breeding age sandeels in those areas of Shetland that have been studied in 1990, including Fair Isle, compare with surveys from previous years as revealed by research trawls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Trawl survey data from fishing grounds around Shetland, including Fair Isle, can be used to give an indication of the relative abundance of 0-group, 1-group and breeding age (2+ group) sandeels. These data are summarised in the table.

Mean numbers of sandeel caught per 30-minute survey haul from grounds off Shetland, 1984 to 1990

Year	Age		
	0	*1*	*2+*
1984	891,898	47,592	48,198
1985	202,826	78,055	76,784
1986	683,044	56,653	36,878
1987	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
1988	141,457	1,421	39,868
1989	863,181	9,283	11,974
1990	90,148	30,118	8,851

[1] No survey in 1987.

Preliminary analysis of the distribution of sandeels between the fishing grounds suggests that the distribution of 0-group fish in August 1990 was similar to that in preceding years and that the distribution of 0-group fish has changed little since the start of the surveys in 1984. Similarly, the distribution of 1-group fish is comparable to that in preceding years. The analysis suggests that the distribution of breeding age (2+) fish varies from year to year with little correlation in their distribution between years.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the main predators of 0, 1 and 2 group sandeels, respectively, in Shetland water; and what evidence Her Majesty's Government have for any changes in predation levels in the last 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The main predators on these sandeels are seabirds, seals and fish. The limited data available on changes between years do not allow firm conclusions to be made.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the latest estimates for the level of recruitment for the Shetland sandeel stock for each year from 1984; what estimates were available for the same year in June 1988 and June 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Levels of recruitment to the Shetland sandeel stock since 1984, as estimated by assessments made in the years 1988-90, are as follows:

Recruitment to Shetland sandeel stock, 1984-89 expressed as millions of 0-group on 1 July.

0-group recruits in year	*Assessment*		
	1988	*1989*	*1990*
1984	29,188	27,065	21,212
1985	21,343	29,573	19,473
1986	19,451	48,955	24,924
1987	2,196	2,258	3,550
1988	20,750	1,273	6,440
1989	—	[1]—	25,327
1990	—	—	[1]—

[1] No estimate possible due to closure of fishery in second half of year.

The assessments made in 1989 and 1990 used an improved method of analysis. In 1989 and possibly also in 1990, fishing was concentrated in areas where the older fish predominate, thus changing the exploitation pattern and disrupting the assessment. Also, and in recent years assessment has been inhibited by low fishing mortality in the Shetland sandeel stock.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what would be the current size of the Shetland sandeel spawning stock, according to current stock assessment models, had there been no fishing mortality since 1982.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There is a very wide number of possible models which might be used to predict spawning stock biomass in the absence of fishing mortality. A simple model which assumes recruitment in the absence of fishing is the same as that estimated to have occurred since 1982 predicts a spawning stock biomass for ages 2-5 of 23,600 tonnes in 1990.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will break down the total numbers of deaths caused by breast cancer for each year since 1979 into ages 16 to 25 years, 25 to 34 years, 35 to 44 years, 45 to 54 years, 55 to 64 years, and 65 years and over.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Deaths from Breast Cancer 1979-89, Males (ICD 9[1] 175) and Female (ICD 9[1] 174)

	Age						
	15–24	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55–64*	*65+*	*Total*
1979							
Male	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
Female	0	17	73	217	261	608	1,176
1980							
Male	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Female	0	14	104	195	299	602	1,214

	Age						
	15–24	*25–34*	*35–44*	*45–54*	*55–64*	*65+*	*Total*
1981							
Male	0	0	0	0	1	6	7
Female	0	13	63	200	268	631	1,175
1982							
Male	0	0	0	1	0	7	8
Female	0	14	69	215	294	636	1,228
1983							
Male	0	0	0	1	0	8	9
Female	0	8	81	192	293	688	1,262
1984							
Male	0	0	0	0	1	5	6
Female	0	12	76	193	301	660	1,242
1985							
Male	0	0	1	0	4	7	12
Female	1	11	80	187	267	706	1,252
1986							
Male	0	1	1	1	3	7	13
Female	1	9	66	203	292	742	1,313
1987							
Male	0	0	1	2	0	8	11
Female	0	12	67	163	287	705	1,234
1988							
Male	0	0	0	0	1	6	7
Female	0	12	76	165	253	756	1,261
1989							
Male	0	0	0	2	1	4	7
Female	0	10	78	200	298	770	1,356

[1] International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision.

Telephone Taping

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate has received any requests for an inquiry into the illegal taping of a telephone conversation of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) during May or June 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has received no such requests.

Training

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers of people leaving employment training having completed (i) up to four weeks, (ii) four to 12 weeks, (iii) 12 to 26 weeks, (iv) 26 to 38 weeks, (v) 38 to 52 weeks and (vi) over 52 weeks' training in each month from January, for each of the Training Agency areas covering *(a)* Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll, *(b)* Lothian and Borders, *(c)* Lanarkshire, *(d)* Highlands and Islands, *(e)* Grampian and Tayside, *(f)* Glasgow City, *(g)* Central and Fife and *(h)* Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1990]*: The information is not available in the form requested. Information about leavers is obtained through a survey and returns from leavers are incomplete. This survey provides data on a quarterly basis as set out below about the percentages of people leaving employment training. In considering the information it is important to bear in mind that entering permanent employment is a major reason for people ceasing to participate in employment training.

	Actual length of stay					
	Up to 4 weeks per cent.	*Over 4 weeks up to 3 months* per cent.	*Over 3 months up to 6 months* per cent.	*Over 6 months up to 9 months* per cent.	*Over 9 months up to 12 months* per cent.	*Over 12 months* per cent.
January to March 1990						
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	14	24	23	11	23	4
Lothian and Borders	12	20	21	11	31	5
Lanarkshire	15	24	19	9	27	4
Highlands and Islands	8	28	30	7	21	6
Grampian and Tayside	17	25	26	7	21	4
Glasgow City	14	22	19	10	30	5
Central and Fife	13	22	19	8	36	3
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	11	20	21	9	33	5
April to June 1990						
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	16	29	19	13	21	2
Lothian and Borders	13	31	17	10	24	4
Lanarkshire	13	26	18	10	27	5
Highlands and Islands	7	37	28	8	12	8
Grampian and Tayside	12	34	25	12	12	3
Glasgow City	13	30	18	12	23	4
Central and Fife	13	24	20	13	28	2
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	12	28	16	10	29	4

	Up to 4 weeks per cent.	Over 4 weeks up to 3 months per cent.	Over 3 months up to 6 months per cent.	Over 6 months up to 9 months per cent.	Over 9 months up to 12 months per cent.	Over 12 months per cent.
July to September 1990						
Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyll	10	24	23	12	26	4
Lothian and Borders	13	24	22	12	27	3
Lanarkshire	14	21	20	12	30	3
Highlands and Islands	8	31	31	8	20	1
Grampian and Tayside	12	25	27	12	21	3
Glasgow City	13	25	23	10	25	3
Central and Fife	13	28	20	13	24	1
Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway	11	21	24	11	32	3

Health Service

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what honorarium is given to each member of the health boards; and how many meetings each board holds per annum.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* Regarding an honorarium for health board members, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on Friday 6 July to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) at column *733*. Each health board meets as often as it finds necessary to conduct its business, but procedural regulations require meetings to be held not less than once every three months. Members are also involved in meetings of committees and working parties and they serve on a variety of appeal panels.

WALES

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what conclusion he has reached on the expression of interest received from Pembrokeshire district health authority for national health service trust status.

Mr. David Hunt: I have invited the health authority to proceed to work up and submit an application to become a trust on the basis set out in its expression of interest.

National Curriculum

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to publish for consultation the draft orders with attainment targets and programmes of study for history and geography in the national curriculum.

Mr. David Hunt: I have published today for consultation draft orders with associated documents setting out attainment targets and programmes of study for history and geography in the national curriculum as required by section 21(3) of the Education Reform Act 1988. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) further to his answer to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 11 December, *Official Report*, columns *332-33*, if he will list against each Department and area of responsibility within his Department *(a)* the expenditure relevant to that department or responsibility in respect of press advertising, *(b)* the expenditure for television advertising and *(c)* the figure for other advertising and promotion;

(2) whether he will publish tables showing the amount spent in each of the last five years by his Department on *(a)* advertising in the press, *(b)* advertising on television and radio and *(c)* other advertising and promotions in respect of (1) health; (2) education, (3) agriculture, (4) the Valleys initiative, (5) employment and economic issues, (6) promotion of tourism and (7) environmental issues;

(3) if he will list the 10 most expensive items of expenditure within each of the headings of press advertising, television advertising and other advertising and promotion by his Department in each of the last three years;

(4) if he will list the publicity campaigns that have been undertaken by his Department in each of the last three years and the sums spent on each in respect of *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* television advertising and *(c)* other forms of advertising and promotion on each.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answers 17-20 December 1990]:* A detailed breakdown of expenditure by the Welsh Office on advertising and promotion in 1989-90 is set out in table 1.

Table 2 provides comparable information in respect of the 10 most expensive items/campaigns undertaken in that year.

Equivalent breakdowns for the years prior to 1989-90 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Table 1
Advertising and promotion expenditure: 1989-90

£000

	Television	Press	Other	Total
Agriculture	—	4	344	348
Education	—	—	147	147
Health	53	3	299	355
Industry, Employment, etc	—	50	201	251
Transport	4	123	101	228
Community charge	—	123	327	450

	Television	Press	Other	Total
CADW	—	30	133	163
Other	—	21	206	227
Total	57	354	1,758	2,169

Table 2
Major advertising and promotion items/campaigns: 1989-90

£000

	Television	Press	Other	Total
Community charge	—	123	327	450
Festival of food and farming	—	4	275	279
Misuse of drugs	53	1	77	131
National curriculum	—	—	103	103
Enterprise Wales	—	16	53	69
Health exhibition	—	—	64	64
Drink drive	4	—	53	57
Farm conservation grant	—	—	43	43
Urdd Eisteddfod	—	—	40	40
National Health Service forum	—	—	35	35

Village Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the local management of primary schools, with particular reference to the future management and continuation of small village schools in rural Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local management of schools was introduced for the benefit of all schools. The arrangements enable the local education authorities to take account of disproportionately high costs faced by small schools where they consider it appropriate to do so. Accordingly, rural schools need face no greater threat to their existence under LMS than they did from previous funding arrangements.

As regards the future management of small schools, we have recently consulted LEAs and others about extending delegation of responsibility for managing their budget share to all primary schools by 1 April 1994.

Rural Housing

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals to increase the provision of housing for young people in rural Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Gentleman today.

Alcohol Misuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sums of money within his Department's budgets for *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* television, *(c)* radio and *(d)* other activities of promotion and publicity have been related to tackling the problem of alcohol misuse in each of the last five years and in the present financial year; what percentage this constitutes of the finances available under each heading; and what percentage the total for each year represents of his Department's total publicity budget for that year.

Mr. David Hunt: Funding is made available from the Welsh Office to a number of agencies and organisations for the promotion of sensible drinking habits. It is not possible centrally to identify separate publicity activities.

Cardiff Bay

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the latest estimated cost of the Cardiff bay barrage, including the initial design and consultancy costs and the costs to his Department of the Bill and its subsequent passage through the House;

(2) what are the latest figures for public loans, grants and subsidies to the Cardiff Bay development corporation from the beginning of the project to its completion.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest estimates of the cost of the development strategy for Cardiff bay, including the proposed barrage, were contained in the letter of 13 December 1990 from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

The costs of the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill have been met by Cardiff Bay development corporation and no significant additional costs have been incurred by my Department.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the number of new jobs which will be created by the works currently being undertaken by the Cardiff Bay development corporation; and if he will list these new jobs by category of employment;

(2) what is the estimated number of new jobs which will result from the works currently being undertaken by the Cardiff Bay development corporation *(a)* if a barrage is constructed and *(b)* if a barrage is not constructed; and if he will list the jobs, by category of employment, which will be created if a barrage is constructed.

Mr. David Hunt: The works currently being undertaken by Cardiff Bay development corporation are aimed primarily at bringing land forward for development by the private sector, whose projects will create employment. It is therefore not meaningful to link the creation of permanent jobs with specific activities of the corporation.

The economic appraisal of the development strategy estimated that the following numbers of jobs would be created after 15 to 20 years:

Type of development	*with barrage*	*without barrage*
B1 (Use class B1)	18,050	7,950
Industrial	1,050	1,850
Retail	3,900	2,850
Leisure	2,350	450
	25,350	13,100
Job Losses	500	400
Total	24,850	12,700

In addition, it is estimated that the following indirect jobs, that is those created through the supply of goods and services to the newly developed areas as well as induced jobs, those arising through the spending of those newly employed in the area and as a result of the indirect employment, would be created.

	Direct (net)	*Indirect*	*Total*
With barrage	24,850	7,450	32,300
Without barrage	12,700	3,800	16,500

River Taff (Sewage Discharges)

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated tonnage of raw sewage and partly treated sewage released into the River Taff and its tributaries by sewage treatment plants in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what is the projected tonnage for 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This information is not available. I understand that most of the raw or partially treated sewage discharged into the River Taff is from emergency or storm sewer overflows. The operation of such overflows and volumns discharged vary according to weather conditions. The consented volumes of discharges and the results of sampling of controlled waters undertaken by the National Rivers Authority are entered on to public registers maintained by the authority.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are to be taken to stop the flow of raw effluent into the River Taff and its tributaries from sewage treatment plants working in that catchment area.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority and those discharging the effluent. I have asked the NRA to write to the hon. Gentleman on this matter.

Funerals

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward legislation to amend the Town and Country Planning (Use Clauses) Order, S.I. (1987), No. 764, so as to exclude chapels of rest, mortuaries and funeral parlours from the category of "Director of Funerals" in class A1.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: This matter was considered as part of the review which preceded the 1987 order and it was decided to make no change.

NHS Employees

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 13 December, *Official Report*, column *508*, he will place in the Library a copy of the advice to employees on their duty to avoid any conflict of interest between their responsibilities as national health service employees and their private and commercial interests, or a full summary of guidance that has been given to employees, which employees are expected to observe pending the publication of any fresh and authoritative advice by his Department.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Advice given to staff is essentially a matter for individual health authorities as employers.

Existing departmental guidance which is of long standing is limited to a statement of principle as regards the expected conduct of staff in connection with the acceptance of gifts and hospitality and the pursuit of private transactions with contractors and other suppliers of goods to the NHS. The new central guidance now being prepared will update and expand upon those principles and will set out general rules to be followed in circumstances where the private interests of employees may conflict with their public duties or where the suspicion of such a conflict may arise.

Welsh National Opera

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the sums of money from all sources which he is making available directly from his Department or in conjunction with others to the Welsh National Opera in the present financial year; what were the comparable figures in 1989-90; and if he will list the projected figures for 1991-92 and subsequent years insofar as firm or tentative projections have been made;

(2) what discussions have taken place between Welsh Office Ministers, or officials and the Welsh National Opera on finances; what differences have arisen over the financial contribution of Government to the Welsh National Opera; and what differences still remain;

(3) if he will make a full statement on financial arrangements for the Welsh National Opera in the present financial year and in 1991 and future financial years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Welsh National Opera company is funded jointly by the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Welsh Arts Council, which is itself a committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain and is funded by them. The Arts Council of Great Britain is funded by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts about the financial position of the Welsh National Opera company.

We have received representations both from representatives of the Welsh National Opera company direct and from others on its behalf about the implications of the Arts Council of Great Britain's decision not to give the company a grant from the enhancement fund in 1991-92. We are informed that further discussions are planned between the company and the Arts Council of Great Britain. We welcome this and hope for a satisfactory outcome.

Health Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will order an investigation into Powys health authority's recent inability to find money to buy wardrobes for long stay patients on ward D at Bronllys.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No. This is a matter for Powys health authority, which advises that the residents on Defynnog ward have individual wardrobes.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he intends to make to the level of finances he will give to health authorities in Wales and the way the cash is distributed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: My right hon. Friend is considering the changes needed to bring the distribution of resources to health authorities in Wales in line with the new arrangements introduced by the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. The service was consulted on proposals for capital funding last year and consideration is now being given to the detail of their implementation. A consultation paper on options for a new revenue formula was issued last week and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

The level of funding required by health authorities in Wales is determined each year in the context of public expenditure plans and my right hon. Friend will be making an announcement in due course on the allocations to health authorities for the next financial year.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether the increase of £183 million in expenditure on the national health service in Wales, announced in his Department's press release of 12 December, includes the £11 million to be found from cuts and income generation schemes which he refers to in the same press release.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the opportunity to clarify the position.

The expected £11 million from cost improvements and income generation is in addition to the £183 million increase in Welsh Health Spending announced in December last year. The NHS in Wales will therefore benefit from both the record cash increase and the internally generated funds in its continuing drive to put the interests of patients first and deliver the highest possible standard of care.

It is, or course, wrong and misleading to refer to genuine efficiency savings as cuts.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the last three financial years, the current financial year and the next financial year *(a)* the forecast of health service inflation which was being made by his Department when the announcement of provision for each of the above years was made, *(b)* the actual level of health service inflation for each year for which it is known and his latest estimate for 1990-91, *(c)* the forecast of general inflation made by the Government and at the nearest available date to the announcement referred to in *(a)* above and *(d)* the actual level of general inflation for each of the years for which it is known and his latest estimate for 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: When notifying health authorities of their cash allocations each year, the Department informs authorities of the forecast level of general inflation which has been given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement. For the years 1987-88 to 1990-91 these forecasts were:

	Per cent.
1987-88	3·75
1988-89	4·5
1989-90	5·0
1990-91	5·0

Authorities are also advised that they should make prudent provision for pay and price rises within the cash allocation which they receive. While the announcement of allocations for 1991-92 has yet to be made, the forecast level of general inflation next year, as announced by the Chancellor in his autumn statement is 6 per cent.

The cash increases provided to health authorities at the start of the year exceeded the Chancellor's forecasts. In addition, authorities have received, during the course of each financial year, additional recurrent funding to meet the excess cost (over and above the level of forecast inflation) of review bodies' pay awards (for doctors, dentists, nurses and midwives and for the professions allied to medicine). In 1988-89, authorities also receive additional recurring funds to meet the cost of the clinical nurses regrading review.

Information relating to the actual level of pay and price inflation experienced by Welsh health authorities is not available centrally. This will vary from authority to authority depending on the proportion and composition of their spending on pay and non pay expenditure. However, information is compiled by the Department of Health on the actual overall level of inflation experienced within hospital and community health services' expenditure in England and for the period 1987-88 to 1989-90 the figures were:

	Per cent
1987-88	8·5
1988-89	10·5
1989-90	7·3

An equivalent figure for 1990-91 is not yet available.

The information requested on the actual level of general inflation in the years 1987-88 to 1989-90, together with the latest estimated for 1990-91, is as follows:

	Per cent
1987-88	5·45
1988-89	7·30
1989-90	6·37
[1]1990-91	8·00

[1]estimate

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the last three financial years, the current financial year and the next financial year (1) the total amount of direct Welsh Office funds, not including cost savings or income generation, allocated to each district health authority in Wales and for each special health authority in Wales and (2) the total expenditure authorised by his Department for each district health authority and special health authority in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The information requested regarding the total allocations (ie revenue and capital) made to each district health authority in Wales and to the two special health authorities in the period 1987-88 to 1990-91 is provided in the table. Allocations to health authorities and to the two special health authorities for 1991-92 will be announced later this month.

Health authorities have a statutory responsibility to contain their cash expenditure within their notified cash allocations. In the event that an authority's cash spending exceeds its attributable resources, the resultant overspending is retrospectively legitimised by an increase in allocation to cover the overspend. The overspending is recovered in the subsequent financial year when a reduction, equivalent to the level of the previous years' overspend, is made to the allocation of the authority concerned.

Total Allocation

£ million

District Health Authority	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*[1]1990-91*
Clwyd	97·045	108·964	115·684	124·004
East Dyfed	59·335	67·269	77·402	84·958
Gwent	117·356	129·822	138·893	146·224
Gwynedd	59·288	64·496	68·264	72·364
Mid Glamorgan	136·042	151·923	161·917	174·168
Pembrokeshire	22·498	25·906	29·046	30·929
Powys	27·243	29·992	32·569	35·035
South Glamorgan	155·953	173·657	188·941	207·851
West Glamorgan	102·820	115·949	123·696	130·814
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	28·052	26.494	28·448	26·597
Health Promotion Authority for Wales	1·218	1·838	2·303	[2]2·257

[1] Notified allocation as at 9 January.

[2] A further allocation of up to £0·3 million is available to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales, against which they may submit bids for specific developments in 1990-91.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing what proportion of the money spent *(a)* by the Welsh Office itself and *(b)* by each health authority in Wales on training for members of the new health authority boards went on food and accommodation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: As indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) on 5 December 1990 at column *151* two events have been held at the all-Wales level. The costs of these have in the main been met by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority on behalf of the health service in Wales. Details are as follows:

	Total cost £	*Food/ accommodation* £
October briefing event	[1]24,128	[1]7,511
November event	16,655	10,055

[1] Excludes accommodation costs of delegates met by individual health authorities.

The Department does not keep records of training costs incurred at the local level by health authorities.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the amount that Powys health authority is spending on new flagpoles; and if he will order an investigation.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Powys health authority advises that there are no plans to purchase new flagpoles.

Valleys Initiative

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list those projects which constitute the £800 million to be spent under the valleys initiative, indicating *(a)* what proportion of that sum will fall directly on his Department's vote and *(b)* the amount of money to be spent on each project in each year covered by the £800 million total.

Mr. David Hunt: Provision for the programme for the valleys area over the five years from June 1988 to March 1993 is about £800 million. It covers a wide variety of programmes and it is not possible to list the individual projects except at disproportionate cost.

A breakdown of outturn for 1988-89 to 1990-91 and of provision for 1991-93 for the different categories of expenditure is shown in the following table.

Seventy per cent. of the £781·709 million falls within my Department's vote.

Programme for the valleys: Expenditure June 1988 to March 1993 (£ million)

	1988-89 outturn		*1989-90 outturn*		*1990-91 estimated outturn*	*1991-92/ 1992-93 provision*
Urban programme	11·95		16		18·5	41·5
Urban development/urban investment grants[1]	2·6	(5·2)	7·2	(7·2)	6·48	10
Regional industrial grants[1]	28·875	(39·8)	16·1	(38·0)	26·9	42·5
Welsh Development Agency						
Factories	20·73		22·5		28·5	50
Land reclamation	11·9		15·5		18·5	40
Environmental	0·78		0·6		1·5	3
Urban Renewal Unit	0·7		1·57		3·278	5·25
Investment	2·236		2·41		2·6	—
Business development	0·72		1		1·2	3·1
Corporate planning/research	0·1		0·1		0·05	—

	1988-89 outturn	1989-90 outturn	1990-91 estimated outturn	1991-92 1992-93 provision
Roads	11·1	11·73	16·5	42
Training agency	48·6	49·67	45·68	90
Total	140·291	144·38	169·688	327·35
Overall total				£781·709

[1] These programmes are demand led. Funds available for 1988-89 and 1989-90 are shown in brackets.

Small Firms Counselling Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the future of the small firms counselling service in *(a)* the county of Clwyd and *(b)* Wales; and how many small firms counsellors there are in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for the small firms service will transfer to the Training and Enterprise councils in Wales on 1 April. The service in Clwyd will be the responsibility of the North East Wales and North West Wales TECs. There are currently 40 small firms counsellors in Wales.

ENVIRONMENT

Council House Sales

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money local authorities have used from the proceeds of council housing sales to repay Government debt.

Mr. Yeo: The information requested is not available centrally.

Homelessness

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government propose any further assistance to Ealing in respect of short-term leases relating to homeless people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's decisions on housing revenue account subsidy in 1991-92 were announced on 19 December. We propose to make available additional subsidy of up to £25 million in 1991-92 towards the costs of renewal and replacement of existing short term leases. £2,082,375 of this would be for Ealing.

Housing Associations

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached about future grant arrangements for special needs provision by housing associations.

Sir Charles Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect on the provision of move-on housing in rented buildings of the recently announced revenue support from new special needs schemes in other than housing action group-funded buildings; what particular consideration he has given to the implications for people with special needs requiring accommodation to live independently in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to make a statement on the future funding of hostels providing special needs accommodation;

(2) if he will review his decision to exclude health authority, Department of Social Security, Home Office and other externally funded projects from entitlement to hostel deficit grant and special needs management allowance.

Sir George Young: New capital and revenue grant arrangements are to be introduced from April 1991 on the basis of proposals prepared by a joint working party comprising representatives of the Department, the Housing Corporation and the National Federation of Housing Associations. The effect will be to establish a clearer and more cost-effective framework for the future funding of special needs provision by housing associations. The arrangements will, however, need to be kept under review in the light of developments on community care.

A new flat-rate special needs management allowance (SNMA) will replace the present hostel deficit grant (HDG) for new schemes from April 1991. Schemes already in receipt of HDG and eligible for SNMA will be transferred to SNMA by steps over a period of five years starting from April 1992.

The SNMA rate for 1991-92 will be £2,000 per bedspace (1989-90 prices, to be revalued to 1991-92 prices). The allowance will be available for special needs provision in self-contained as well as shared accommodation.

On the capital side, special needs schemes will from April 1991 be brought within the fixed housing association grant (HAG) arrangements which already apply to general needs schemes but will be eligible for grant at 100 per cent. of approved cost.

The Housing Corporation will be carrying out formal consultations on a new determination under the Housing Act 1988 to bring SNMA into effect from this April. It will at the same time prepare and consult on detailed guidance for associations both on SNMA and on the changes in the capital grant arrangements.

I have also considered whether SNMA should be subject to the same restrictions on eligibility as were announced for HDG by my hon. Friend, the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) when he was Minister for Housing and Planning on 8 November at columns 14-15. I have concluded that these restrictions, in particular to schemes capital funded through the corporation, must in the main continue but that, subject to the availability of resources, the corporation should be able to consider for SNMA certain categories of schemes which do not require HAG. These are schemes capital funded by a charitable organisation, leased schemes and

schemes using existing housing association accommodation no longer required for general needs. In supporting such schemes the corporation will need to ensure that its SNMA commitments are contained within provision for current and future years. It will also wish to satisfy itself that the scheme meets the priorities established for its approved development programme and is not tied to meeting the requirements of another organisation through, for example, exclusive nomination rights.

Associations which had applications for HDG budget approval awaiting decision by the corporation at the time of the 8 November announcement will be able to re-submit under the new SNMA arrangements any of those schemes which they consider meet the SNMA eligibility criteria.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the arrangements for notice and the actual notice given by the last chairman of the London Docklands development corporation prior to his resignation; and how much severance pay and pension entitlement he received.

Mr. Key: Chairmen and members of public bodies are public appointees and are not normally required to give notice if they resign.

The previous chairman of the LDDC, Sir Christopher Benson, did not resign but completed his appointment in the normal way.

It is not Government policy to disclose the individual pension arrangements for members of public bodies.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance the Government are giving Nottinghamshire county council to meet additional expenditure incurred following the bad weather; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We currently have no information to suggest that Nottinghamshire county council incurred costs greater than those which it could be expected to meet as part of its normal responsibilities for coping with winter weather. But we will consider any request for assistance made by Nottinghamshire or any other local authority.

Rates Defaulters

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has as to the level of summonses issued for defaulters on *(a)* domestic and *(b)* industrial and commercial rates at the latest convenient date to December 1989.

Mr. Key: From information collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy we estimate that 1·4 million summonses were issued by rating authorities in England in 1989-90. No information is available on the split between domestic and non-domestic ratepayers.

Homelessness

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of people living in bed and breakfast accommodation who were the responsibility of the London borough of Wandsworth on 14 December.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure accommodation for households who have been found to be homeless, or threatened with homelessness, under part III of the Housing Act 1985. Information is reported quarterly to the Department. The latest available figures for the number of homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation are for the end of September 1990. The reported figures, including those for the London borough of Wandsworth, appear in table 7 of "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the third quarter 1990. Supplementary Tables". A copy is in the Library.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will issue advice to local housing authorities on the way in which the provisions of part XII of the Housing Act 1985 should be exercised having regard to homelessness outside London;

(2) if he will make it his policy not to exercise his powers under sections 322 to 326, inclusive, of the Public Health Act 1936 to enforce the provisions of part XII of the Housing Act 1985 where a local authority, in response to applications for short-term night shelter by charities and churches, was choosing not to exercise these powers;

(3) if he will make it his policy not to exercise his powers under sections 322 to 326, inclusive, of the Public Health Act 1936 to enforce the provisions of part XII of the Housing Act 1985 where a local authority, in response to applications for short-term night shelters by charities and churches, is sensitively choosing not to exercise these powers.

Mr. Yeo: The Department's advice to local authorities on the use of their powers under part XII of the Housing Act 1985 is contained in DOE circular 12/86. My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to revise that advice or to exercise his powers under sections 322 to 326 of the Public Health Act 1936.

Humber Estuary

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to designate the Humber estuary a Ramsar site and a special protection site under the European Community directive.

Mr. Baldry: I cannot forecast when the Humber estuary will be designated. As is the case with a number of sites currently being considered by Government, officials are seeking to identify apparent problems or conflicts of interest that need to be examined, in the light of the scientific evidence put forward by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Community Charge (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what future financial help for the year 1991-92 will be given to the London borough of Wandsworth in assisting the authority towards its community charge.

Mr. Key: Under our proposed settlement for 1991-92 Wandsworth will receive revenue support grant, payments from the national non-domestic rate pool, inner London education grant and area protection grant totalling nearly £1,200 per adult compared with an inner London average for 1991-92 of £1,392.

Housing Investment Figures

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he issued the latest housing investment programme figures; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 December 1990 to the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) at col. 463-64.

Housing (Wandsworth)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present number of either flats or houses belonging to the London Borough of Wandsworth which were empty on the 14 December.

Mr. Yeo: The latest available information on empty council dwellings relates to 1 April 1990 and was provided by the London borough of Wandsworth in their April 1990 housing investment programme return (HIP1), a copy of which is in the Library.

Rental Accommodation

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy towards the building by local authorities of rental accommodation.

Sir George Young: It is for local authorities to determine their own priorities for housing capital expenditure within the resources available. However, we have encouraged them to concentrate on the improvement of their own stock and on assistance to private owners with grants. The Government's policy is that housing associations should be the main providers of new subsidised homes for rent, with local authorities fulfilling a mainly enabling role.

Privatisations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the privatisations with which his Department has been involved since 1979, indicating in each case the date of the sale, the proceeds of the sale and the estimated current value of the company.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 14 December 1990]:* My Department was involved with the privatisation of the water and sewerage companies in England and Wales. The sale took place in 1989. The estimated net proceeds will be £3,454 million. The estimated current value of the partly paid shares in the companies is £5·7 billion.

Refuse-derived Fuel

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the Government intend to encourage the development and use of refuse-derived fuel.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

Municipal and industrial refuse are major potential sources of energy and my Department's policy is to encourage the use of waste as a fuel wherever it is economically viable and environmentally acceptable. My Department is undertaking a substantial programme of research and development aimed at overcoming the difficulties associated with the handling, storing and burning of refuse-derived fuel (RDF). At present there are 12 current RDF R and D projects with a total contract value of £1·3 million. In addition the non-fossil fuel obligation will help the RDF industry to enter the market for electricity generation; there were two such projects included in the initial tranche of the NFFO.

Arrangements for the second tranche were announced on 19 December. It will be brought forward in 1991 and it is the Government's intention to include in that tranche a separate band reserved for municipal and general industrial waste incineration projects, which will include refuse-derived fuel.

Gipsy Site

Mr. Wiggin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what undertakings he gave to the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare about informing him of the date and place of the local inquiry into the application by Avon county council for a gipsy caravan site at Box Bush lane, Hewish, Weston-super-Mare; when he notified objectors and others of these facts; when he expects to inform the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare of these facts; and what steps he will take to ensure that ministerial undertakings are adhered to in the future.

Sir George Young: On 4 December 1989 my hon. Friend, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, undertook to inform the hon. Member of the date of the inquiry. Objectors and others who made representations were notified on 30 November 1990. It is regretted that my hon. Friend was not notified at the same time. He was notified on 20 December 1990 when details of the inquiry were included in a letter responding to points he raised on 13 November 1990 about the need for an inquiry into the proposals.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what recent assessment he has made of the extent of pesticide and other chemical contamination of groundwater sources as a result of the operation of dilute and disperse landfill sites; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to conduct a survey of all dilute and disperse waste sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department is currently conducting a survey of the effect of landfill sites on groundwater quality in England and Wales. The survey will include the type of site to which the hon. Member refers.

Sulphur Dioxide

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the Iiasa data on sulphur dioxide emissions provided to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Mr. Baldry: The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) recently published projections of future sulphur dioxide emissions through to the year 2000 as part of their acid rain project. Projections of energy demand and fuel use need to take into account a range of factors which are subject to constant change and are difficult to predict. The IIASA projections have not

taken into account for example the recent changes of policy in some eastern European countries and the European Community's large combustion plants directive.

Water Companies

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer on 18 December, *Official Report*, column 116, what notice water companies will be required to take of any guidelines produced by the Director of Water Services following the current consultative process and what sanctions are available *(a)* to him, *(b)* to the Director of Water Services and *(c)* to consumers if the guidelines and criteria are disregarded.

Mr. Baldry: Water companies have powers to fix charges and make charges schemes under sections 75 and 76 of the Water Act 1989. Although each company has discretion about how it structures its charges, it is required by condition E of its instrument of appointment (licence)

"to ensure that no undue preference is shown to, and that there is no undue discrimination against, any class of customers or potential customers".

It is the responsibility of the Director General of Water Services to ensure that each company complies with the conditions of its licence.

The Secretaries of State for the Environment and Wales and the director general have duties under section 7(3) to ensure that the interests of all customers are protected. It is the duty of the director general to keep under review matters relating to the carrying out of their functions by water companies. However, the Secretaries of State may give general directions indicating the considerations to which the director general should have regard in determining the order of priority in which matters are to be brought under review.

Following the consultation, the director general will draw up general guidelines for companies to consider in drawing up their charges and charging schemes. These guidelines are likely to cover both issues on which the director general has legal powers and other, broader issues on which the consultation paper has given customers an opportunity to contribute to a public debate about future policy.

Should a company fix charges or make charges schemes which appear to the director general to contravene its licence conditions, he can take enforcement action under section 20 of the Act. If he considers that any actions of the company operate against the public interest, he may refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, so that it can consider modifications to the conditions of the company's licence.

Enforcement of licence conditions is a matter for the director general. However, an individual customer may seek judicial review if he thinks that the director general has failed to take appropriate action. Finally a customer may challenge a company in the courts if he considers a charge levied by the company has not been properly determined by reference to a charges scheme.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Radiation (Compensation)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 15 November, *Official Report*, column *194*, if he will make a statement on his conclusions about a no-fault compensation scheme for service-related personnel who have been exposed to nuclear radiation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Officials have now largely concluded their studies into this matter. I hope to make a statement in the near future.

The Gulf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessments and simulations there have been of the effect upon the environment of Saddam Hussein's threat to blow up Kuwaiti oil installations in the event of war; and if he will put the results in the Library.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has commissioned any research on the ecological effects of a war in the Gulf; and which sources of information already available he has used on this issue.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to the hon. Member.

Decommissioning

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to announce decommissioning of HMS Valiant, HMS Courageous, HMS Swiftsure and HMS Sovereign.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend announced on 25 July at column 471 that we intend to maintain a submarine fleet of about 16 boats in the future, of which around three-quarters would be nuclear powered. Following the decisions to decommission Warspite, Churchill and Conqueror, we are considering the further steps needed to achieve the revised force level. Decisions will be announced as they are taken.

Glen Garry Transmitter

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the full cost of development of the experimental extremely low frequency transmitter to be built at Glen Garry, to date.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: It is not our policy to release details of expenditure on specific research programmes.

HMS Resolution

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if HMS Resolution is to undergo a fourth refit.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the electoral registration percentage for service men in each of the last three years in the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force; and what is the cost of running the three district electoral register offices for each of the services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The electoral registration percentage for service men in each of the last three years is as follows:

	1988 per cent.	*1989 per cent.*	*1990 per cent.*
Royal Navy[1]	—	—	75
Army	63·5	64	65
Royal Air Force	42·0	48	53

[1] It is not possible to give an accurate figure for 1988 and 1989, though it is believed that for both years it was around 75 per cent.

The estimated running costs of the electoral registration offices in 1990-91 are as follows:

	£
Royal Navy	15,350
Army	29,700
Royal Air Force	26,000

Loch Lochy Listening Post

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has reconsidered his intention to establish an extremely low frequency listening post on Sron A'Choire Ghairbh beside Loch Lochy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 19 February 1990 at column *573*.

Iraq (Weapons)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the defence implications for United Kingdom service men of (1) the involvement of scientists and engineers employed by Man Technologie of West Germany in assisting Iraq in developing centrifuges for enriching uranium to military grade;

(2) the sale by the French-based company Gachot to Iraq of militarily sensitive valves and vacuum pumps;

(3) uranium sales by Portugal to Iraq;

(4) the sale to Iraq by Leybold-Meraus of Cologne of valves which can be used in the manufacture of a uranium enrichment centrifuge capable of making weapons grade highly enriched uranium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We continue to assess that Iraq is not currently capable of constructing a nuclear explosive device, notwithstanding recent allegations regarding imports of various materials and items of equipment.

NATO Operations and Plans

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all NATO operations and plans designed for internal security purposes in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other NATO countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the practice of successive Governments not to comment on operational matters of this nature. NATO does not, however, have a role in internal security matters.

HMS Dreadnought

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to take a final decision in respect of the disposal of HMS Dreadnought.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to my answer to the hon. Member of 13 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *505*.

Northern Ireland

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will consider providing financial compensation for Ministry of Defence employees working in Northern Ireland similar to that provided for civilians working in a temporary capacity at Ministry of Defence locations in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Ministry of Defence civilian staff based temporarily in Northern Ireland receive allowances designed to reimburse the additional costs incurred as a result of living away from their normal place of residence. It would not be appropriate to make similar payments to staff permanently resident in Northern Ireland who do not have similar financial commitments.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 15 January 1991

EMPLOYMENT

Deaf Trainees

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Training Agency has researched the use of the communication support services for deaf trainees; and if he will make it his policy that the provision of these services will be maintained by the training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Jackson: My Department has conducted no formal research specifically into the use of communication support services for deaf trainees. Training and enterprise councils are required to provide a communication service for deaf trainees, together with other relevant support to trainees with disabilities where appropriate.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Marriage Breakdown

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest estimate of the full annual cost to the Government of marriage breakdown.

Mr. John Patten: Detailed research on which to base a firm estimate is not available. We are presently considering an estimate that RELATE—formerly the National Marriage Guidance Council—has drawn up based on its own work. It is likely that considerable further research and verification would be necessary before this could be used as a definitive basis for calculation.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the statement by the deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan police on the force's strategy for 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am placing copies of the strategy statement for 1991, which I fully endorse, in the Library today. I am also sending copies to all right hon. and hon. Members whose constituencies fall wholly or partly within the Metropolitan police district. I am inviting London Members to discuss the statement with me.

ENVIRONMENT

Refuse Disposal and Collection

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take with regard to circular 13/88 and the matter of charges for the collection of waste from mixed hereditaments.

Mr. Baldry: I understand that some local authorities have not fully complied with the advice given by my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) on 4 July 1990.

This guidance recognised that some of the waste from a composite property arises from the residential part of the property. My hon. Friend advised that the most sensible way for local authorities to treat such properties under their existing powers is that, once they have received a request to collect commercial waste from such properties, they should collect or empty free of charge at least one refuse sack or dustbin per week per property. They should also be prepared to consider alternative or additional arrangements on an individual basis.

It is our intention to revise the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988 to which circular 13/88 relates. The revision will take account of the changes brought about by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and we shall take the opportunity to clarify the advice to local authorities about the treatment of refuse collection from composite hereditaments. However, no local authority should use our plans to revise the regulations as an excuse for delaying implementation of the policy that I have described.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has on *(a)* the lowest and *(b)* the highest United Kingdom refuse disposal costs per tonne;

(2) what information he has on *(a)* the lowest and *(b)* the highest United Kingdom refuse collection costs per tonne;

(3) what information he has on the cost of United Kingdom refuse collection to local authorities;

(4) what information he has on the cost of United Kingdom refuse disposal to local authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The costs of waste collection and disposal vary widely depending on the type of waste, method of collection or disposal, and proximity of disposal facilities. The Department has no information about highest and lowest costs, and the latest published figures for average costs are for 1986-87. These are set out in the table.

	total £ *million*	*per tonne* £
Gross revenue expenditure on waste disposal by local authorities in England and Wales	270	10
Gross revenue expenditure on waste collection by local authorities in England and Wales	515	29

The information should be treated with caution both because estimates of waste tonnage are not always reliable, and because the response rate from local authorities was very poor. Figures for later years cannot be produced because the base data are insufficiently reliable. The Department is currently reviewing the availability of waste statistics as a whole.

Water Charges

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his reply of 18 December, *Official Report*, c. 116, *(a)* what definition of undue discrimination is to be used in drawing up guidelines on water charges and

(b) if he will list the various classes of customers and potential customers for whom protection against such discrimination is to be provided.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him yesterday.

Crown Offices

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there are any covenants or other restrictions on the Crown offices in Crown way, Cathays, Cardiff, which would prevent their use by *(a)* Government Departments other than the Welsh Office and *(b)* non-Government users or bodies.

Mr. Yeo: The freehold of the Crown Offices in Crown way, Cathays, Cardiff is vested in the Secretary of State for the Environment. The conveyances contain restrictive covenants limiting the use of the premises for the purpose of Government Offices.

Environment Council

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 20 and 21 December 1990.

Mr. Trippier: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting.

The Council agreed a new regulation for the control of substances that deplete the ozone layer. This is necessary to implement within the Community the revision of the Montreal protocol which was agreed in London last June, but it also demonstrates our commitment to the protection of the ozone layer by requiring a faster phase-out within the Community. Under the regulation, chlorofluorocarbons will be cut by 85 per cent. by the middle of 1995 and phased out by the middle of 1997—two and a half years in advance of the Montreal protocol requirements. Halons are to be cut by 50 per cent. by the start of 1995, and phased out by the end of the century. Carbon tetrachloride will be phased out by 1998, and 1,1,1-trichloroethane by 2005. In certain cases exemptions for essential uses, such as medical aerosols and some fire-fighting applications, may be permitted, should those prove necessary. I pressed at the Council for an even quicker phase-out of CFCs and halons. Nonetheless, the agreement reached is a major step forward in protecting the ozone layer, and sends a strong signal to the rest of the world that still faster cuts than those agreed in London can be achieved.

The United Kingdom worked actively to secure agreement in the Council of a common position on the proposal for a consolidated directive on car emissions. The strict new standards it contains would come into effect from the end of 1992. They would require the fitting of three-way catalysts to all new cars, and would reduce pollution from each car to about a quarter of present levels. The Council also agreed to invite the European Commission to produce a proposal for a further round of yet stricter standards which could come into effect from 1996. This is excellent news for Europe's environment and confirms the Community's determination to come to grips with pollution from transport. It is also good news for the motor industry, which will now have a much clearer idea of the standards towards which it should engineer.

The Council agreed a directive on hazardous waste to replace the existing directive on toxic and dangerous waste which dates from 1978. The new directive's most important feature is a provision for defining hazardous waste in a clear, practical way. Before the directive comes into force a list of hazardous wastes will be drawn up. Other features of the new directive are controls on the mixing and movement of hazardous waste. The new directive will be implemented by means of the proposed revision of the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980.

A regulation establishing a programme of action for the protection of the Mediterranean sea was agreed. The programme, known as MEDSPA, will provide pump-priming funds for a range of actions to help deal with the serious environmental problems affecting the Mediterranean.

The Council also agreed a resolution welcoming the European Commission's recent green paper on the urban environment. The resolution notes that, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the primary responsibility for protecting the urban environment lies with local, regional and national authorities, but recognises that in certain areas there may be a role for the Community to play. The Council has invited the Commission to establish a group of experts to advise on possible further action.

Proposed directives on sewage treatment and on the classification, packaging and labelling of dangerous substances were both discussed in detail. Very good progress was made in each case on resolving a number of outstanding issues, and Ministers expressed the hope that agreement could be reached on both directives at the next Council meeting.

With support from a number of member states, I was able to secure from the European Commission a commitment to review the operation of certain aspects of the existing directive on the protection of wild birds. In particular, the Commission agreed to look at those provisions in the directive that impede action against certain pest species for which control measures are necessary, and where this would not endanger the conservation of the species. This is a welcome recognition on the Commission's part of the need to address an anomaly which has caused some concern here.

The Council also held brief discussions on climate change, on the use of economic instruments to achieve environmental objectives, and on the site of the European Environment Agency.

Rural Development Commission Factories

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on the disposal of the Rural Development Commission factory estates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Rural Development Commission and its predecessors have funded a very successful programme of workspace provision over many years. Following the announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 23 April, I have sought the advice of the Rural Development Commission on the disposal of its portfolio. The RDC portfolio has a number of special characteristics, among them the fact that many of the factory units that have been provided are in small blocks in remote rural areas. I am pleased to announce that having received the Rural Development Commission's advice, I have decided to proceed with the sale of the portfolio. Government policy

is to encourage suitable premises and sites to be made available through the private sector to new and expanding enterprises in rural areas. The sale of the estate is intended to further this policy by involving the private sector in the ownership and management of property in rural areas. It also builds on the existing policy of selling units to tenants in appropriate circumstances. I propose to introduce a new grants scheme to encourage private developers to make further provision while at the same time withdrawing progressively from direct provision to complement this. The twin objectives of maximising the return to the taxpayer from the sale and encouraging the involvement of a range of private sector interests will best be met through a phased sale, with the intention that this should be spread over a period of about three years with the rate of disposal adjusted to market conditions.

Wherever it is practical to do so, and in line with the above objectives I have asked the Rural Development Commission and English Estates to offer existing tenants an opportunity to bid for their premises.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the rate support grant supplementary report for 1989-90 for England will be published.

Mr. Heseltine: I have laid the supplementary report before the House today. The main purpose of the report is to correct the effects of an error in respect of road lengths in the London borough of Croydon used in the calculation of its grant-related expenditure assessments for 1989-90.

The report requires the approval of the House. Subject to that, I propose to make the revisions to grant payments to reflect the report early in April. Copies of the report and tables showing revised rate support grant entitlements are being sent today to local authority associations and to each authority.

TRANSPORT

Drink Drivers

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the comparative reductions and levels of over-the-limit alcohol in dead drivers from 1982 in Great Britain, New South Wales and Sweden.

Mr. Chope: The table shows, for all drivers and riders killed whose blood alcohol level was known, the proportion who were over the legal limit. Comparative data for Sweden are not available.

	Legal limit mg/100ml	*1982 Per cent.*	*1983 Per cent.*	*1984 Per cent.*	*1985 Per cent.*	*1986 Per cent.*	*1987 Per cent.*	*1988 Per cent.*	*1989 Per cent.*
Great Britain	80	33	28	26	26	24	23	21	19(p)
New South Wales	50(1)	40	36	33	33	34	32	31	33

The following table shows, for all drivers and riders killed whose blood alcohol level was known, the proportion who were over the level specified. The figures are for Great Britain only. Comparative data for Sweden and New South Wales are not available.

Specified blood alcohol level mg/100ml	*1982 Per cent.*	*1983 Per cent.*	*1984 Per cent.*	*1985 Per cent.*	*1986 Per cent.*	*1987 Per cent.*	*1988 Per cent.*	*1989(p) Per cent.*
80	33	28	26	26	24	23	21	19
100	30	25	24	24	22	21	19	18
150	21	18	15	17	17	15	14	13
200	12	11	8	11	9	9	8	8

North Sea Rescue Services

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list year by year since 1980 the dates and locations and numbers of injuries and fatalities of crew members of fast rescue craft engaged in rescues in the North sea oil fields.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department is aware of two incidents: these were both associated with the Piper Alpha oil platform fire in July 1988. Six personnel on two of the rescue craft were injured, two fatally.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list year by year since 1980 the number of successful rescues carried out by fast rescue craft in the North sea oil fields, indicating from where the craft were launched and the dates and location of where the rescues took place.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not collect this data. However, information presented to the public inquiry into the Piper Alpha disaster showed that 126 incidents occurred of men falling overboard from an oil installation between 1974 and 1986, and the most common means of recovery was by fast rescue craft deployed from standby vessels.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate the existing procedures and logging requirements for the repair and maintenance of fast rescue craft used in the North sea oil fields.

Mr. McLoughlin: The recording of the repair or the maintenance of fast rescue craft is a matter for the owner or operator of the standby vessel, but surveyors from the Department will examine the condition of the craft during surveys and general inspections.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make changes in respect of fast rescue craft used in the North sea oil fields *(a)* to power the craft with diesel instead of petrol and *(b)* to have guarded propellers on such craft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: When fast rescue craft were first developed all that was generally available for propulsion

were outboard petrol engines. New developments have made the use of diesel engines more practicable for the larger craft and their use is increasing. The phasing out of petrol engines and the use of guarded propellers will need to be considered in the revision of the present code of practice, but because of the range of duties a fast rescue craft is called upon to perform it is essential that design parameters should be as flexible as possible.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate what training procedures exist for crews of fast rescue craft in the North sea oil field; and who is responsible for monitoring such training.

Mr. McLoughlin: Under the code of practice published by the Department, crews of fast rescue craft should attend a course in the operation of fast rescue boats which is offered by a number of training institutions. These courses are checked and endorsed by the Department. During annual inspections of standby vessels marine surveyors verify that sufficient numbers of crew members who have attended these courses are on board; and they often seek a demonstration of how the boats are handled.

Road Accidents

Mr. Mudd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents occurred, and how many people were killed or injured in those accidents, on *(a)* the M1 between junctions 1 and 17, *(b)* the M6 between junctions 1 and 4, *(c)* the A34 between Oxford and Stratford and *(d)* the A423 between Oxford and Coventry over the period 20 December 1990 to 3 January 1991.

Mr. Chope: I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as the information is available.

Underground Structures

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which Government Departments and associations of statutory or local authorities know the precise position of the principal underground services and utilities and, in particular, the position of sewers, water conduits, cables, pipes and wires belonging to the public utilities and how they relate to one another.

Mr. Chope: The requirements on persons with underground services to maintain records of their position vary according to the statutory powers or licence under which it was placed. The Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 and utilities' enabling legislation require undertakers executing works to consult other undertakers whose apparatus is likely to be affected and the street authority before starting major works. There is a need to improve the consistency and availability of records of underground services and the New Roads and Street Works Bill currently before Parliament contains provision for this.

Deeside Industrial Park

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the start date of the construction of a new entrance to the Deeside industrial park; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Late 1994, subject to satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of funds.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fishing Industry

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on apportioning the British total allowable catch for 1991 to the individual ports; and how he negotiates a Scottish allocation.

Mr. Curry: As agreed with the industry, the United Kingdom 1991 white fish quota will continue to be distributed among the United Kingdom fleet in proportion to the track record of individual fishing vessels. Most pelagic quota is also distributed in the same way, although currently some vessels have a fixed share of certain pelagic fisheries and the non-sector, because of its small size, has received an allocation rather greater than its track record would warrant. Departments will shortly be consulting the industry over the methodology to be applied in distributing pelagic quotas in future. The industry will also be consulted as necessary on the distribution of Hague preference fish obtained by the United Kingdom at the December Council.

Water Protection

Mr. Carttiss: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will publish the code of good agricultural practice on water protection as foreshadowed in the Environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance".

Mr. Gummer: Last autumn's environment White Paper "This Common Inheritance" stated that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would be preparing a revised free advisory package of codes of good agricultural practice for farmers. I am pleased to announce that the first of these codes, which relates to the protection of water, has now been prepared in draft form for consultation in England and Wales. It contains practical and detailed guidance to farmers on how to avoid water pollution from farm wastes, fertilisers, nitrate, fuel oil, sheep dip, carcase disposal and pesticides. This draft code has been placed in the Libraries of the House, and is also available from the Vote Office.

Livestock Protection

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take to improve the protection of livestock in markets.

Mr. Maclean: Orders have been made under the Animal Health Act 1981, to come into force on 1 March 1991, which will lay down detailed welfare safeguards for farm livestock and horses in markets. This important legislation will create a new offence of causing injury or unnecessary suffering to animals in markets. Horses at markets and other places of sale will now be protected by specific controls for the first time. The new orders will introduce minimum ages at which calves and foals can be put through markets without their mothers. There will be a ban on selling calves more than twice in any 28-day period, and practices such as the use of electric goads on calves, young pigs, sheep and horses and the tying of poultry and calves will be prohibited. Among other new provisions are controls on handling, penning, feeding and watering animals.

This legislation has been discussed with market operators and other interested parties, and follows closely recommendations from the Farm Animal Welfare Council, to which I am very grateful. We are also issuing codes of practice which give further guidance to all those involved in markets on how best to safeguard the welfare of animals.

In recent years, concern for animal welfare has become increasingly important in the design and running of today's markets. Everyone should realise that transport to and from market and the time spent there, can be potentially stressful for animals. The overriding principle behind the new orders and codes of practice is the need for particular care and consideration for all animals in these different environments.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Service Pay

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will make a statement about the discretionary pay scheme for grades 2 and 3 staff in the home civil service.

Mr. Renton: In the fourth and last round of awards under the arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the then Prime Minister on 23 April 1987, awards have been made to 21 grade 2s and 53 grade 3s. The total number of staff currently granted awards following four rounds of the scheme is 41 grade 2s and 157 grade 3s, respectively 29 per cent. and 32 per cent. of each grade. This is within the ceiling of 35 per cent. of each grade recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body.

The full-year cost of these awards is approximately £565,000 or about 1·9 per cent. of the annual pay bill for the grades concerned. The scheme is due to be replaced by new arrangements in April 1991.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give sterling's range of variation against *(a)* the franc, *(b)* the deutschmark, *(c)* the lira and *(d)* within the 6 per cent. bands for each month since Britain joined the exchange rate mechanism and for *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* for the three months before joining.

Mr. Maples: Sterling's variation against the franc, deutschmark and lira before and after its entry to the ERM, and the greatest percentage dievations from sterling's central rates against all the other ERM currencies since entry are as follows:

		July	*August*	*September*	[1]*October*	*November*	*December*	[2]*January*
Ff/£	high	10·06	10·18	9·96	10·15	9·90	9·83	9·97
	low	9·56	9·88	9·75	9·82	9·74	9·72	9·80
DM/£	high	3·006	3·034	2·981	3·025	2·936	2·903	2·926
	low	2·929	2·946	2·904	2·929	2·887	2·852	2·888
Lira/£	high	2195	2255	2225	2267	2205	2180	2200
	low	2150	2155	2170	2200	2175	2155	2180
Maximum £ deviation from central rate per cent.	above	—	—	—	+2·70	—	—	+1·05
	below	—	—	—	−4·15	−4·25	−4·67	−4·04

[1] From 8 October 1990.
[2] To 13 January 1991.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the inflow and outflow to and from and the net gain or loss to the reserves from the date of joining the exchange rate mechanism to the latest available date and for the equivalent period before joining.

Mr. Maples: Net changes to the reserves in the three months before and after sterling's entry to the ERM are as follows:

$ million

	Total change	*Level of reserves at end of month*
July	−172	38,842
August	+455	39,297
September	−237	39,060
October[1]	−488	38,572
November	−102	38,470
December	−6	38,464

[1] Sterling entered the ERM on 8 October 1990.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the top and bottom of the pound's bands within the exchange rate mechanism and the highest and lowest points within them reached by sterling in each month since membership.

Mr. Maples: Sterling's upper and lower limits against the other ERM currencies, and the highest and lowest points at close of business since sterling's entry to the mechanism, are as follows:

Currency	Upper limit	Lower limit	October[1] High	October[1] Low	November High	November Low	December High	December Low	January[2] High	January[2] Low
Belgian/Luxembourg Franc[3]	64·6	57·3	62·3	60·2	60·6	59·7	60·0	59·0	60·3	59·6
French Franc	10·51	9·32	10·15	9·82	9·90	9·74	9·83	9·72	9·97	9·80
Italian Lira	2,344	2,079	2,267	2,200	2,205	2,175	2,180	2,155	2,200	2,180
Dutch Florin	3·53	3·13	3·41	3·30	3·31	3·26	3·27	3·22	3·30	3·26
Deutschemark	3·132	2·778	3·025	2·929	2·936	2·887	2·903	2·852	2·926	2·888
Danish Krone	11·95	10·60	11·54	11·19	11·24	11·07	11·14	11·20	11·27	11·14
Irish Punt	1·169	1·037	1·131	1·089	1·100	1·077	1·098	1·068	1·080	1·076
Spanish Peseta	203·6	180·6	190·0	183·8	186·2	183·6	185·0	182·8	184·8	184·0

[1] From 8 October.
[2] To 13 January 1991.
[3] The exchange rate between the Belgian franc and the Luxembourg franc is fixed, with no margin of fluctuation.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide figures for VAT returns for the Gordon constituency, or the Gordon district and Aberdeen district, for the last five years for which data are complete.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures for VAT returns are not available in the form requested except at disproportionate cost. It has been possible to provide details for the last two financial years for traders currently registered at the Aberdeen local VAT office which covers the north-east of Scotland from Montrose to Nairn and the Shetland islands. The figures are as follows:

Year ending	Payments by Traders £ million	Repayments to Traders £ million	Net Payments to Traders £ million
31 March 1989	129·3	165·2	35·9
31 March 1990	167·1	204·5	37·4

Government Telecommunications Service

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the outcome of the Government telecommunications service project negotiation.

Mr. Maples: My right hon. Friend the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury announced in a written answer on 15 February 1990, at column *340*, that negotiations would be opened with Racal Data Networks Ltd. (RDNL) to determine whether the company could satisfactorily supply an integrated voice and data telecommunications service for use by Government Departments, to be known as the Government Telecommunications Service—GTS.

The Government and the company have now reluctantly concluded that it would not be possible to achieve agreement on the terms for the provision of such a service. The two parties have therefore agreed that the GTS negotiations should be discontinued. The decision was announced on 7 January 1991. The Departments concerned in the GTS negotiation will now be considering with the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency how best to meet future telecommunications requirements. This decision does not affect the existing service contracts held by RDNL which the company is continuing to implement—the Government data network—GDN—which serves 18 Departments and includes the NHS family health service network, and the voice network which RDNL is developing for the Department of Social Security.

Economic and Monetary Union

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he plans to submit draft treaty texts to the intergovernmental conference on economic and monetary union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend submitted a document, "Economic and monetary union—beyond Stage 1: Possible Treaty Provisions and Statute for a European Monetary Fund", to the Luxembourg presidency on 8 January. This sets out legal texts designed to amend the treaty of Rome so as to allow for the establishment of a European monetary fund managing a hard ecu in line with the proposals first put forward by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when Chancellor. Copies have been placed in the Vote Office and the House of Commons Library.

Government Staff

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government departments at 1 October 1990.

Mr. Mellor: On 1 October 1990 there were 556,250 staff in post in central Government. Of those, 491,032 were non-industrials and 65,218 were classified as being in industrial work.

HEALTH

Deaf School Leavers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that deaf school leavers are provided with communication support when being assessed under section 5 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986;

(2) what consideration is being given to the implementation of section 3(b) of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 to ensure that deaf people have access to sign language interpreters and other communication support when being assessed for services by local authorities.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to monitor the implementation of section 5 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986, particularly in regard to deaf school leavers.

Mr. Dorrell: The social services inspectorate has carried out an exercise to monitor the implementation of those

sections of the Act that are in force. The results of this inspection, and of the findings of a more specific study of the implementation of sections 5 and 6, were published last year in its reports "Developing Services for Disabled People" and "Developing Services for Young People with Disabilities", copies of which are in the Library. We expect authorities to provide communication support for all clients who require it as a matter of normal good practice, and our guidance on the implementation of community care has emphasised the importance of such services. Similar guidance is to be issued to assist authorities in the implementation of the provisions of the Children Act.

Sign Language Interpreters

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being undertaken by his Department to address the shortage of registered sign language interpreters for deaf patients.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department provides grant aid to the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People, which arranges courses in communication with deaf people and maintains a register of interpreters. The Department has also, for a number of years, grant-aided the British Sign Language Training Authority. The availability of sign language interpreters to deaf people seeking health care is a matter for local health service management, who are best placed to determine and provide for the local need for such a service.

Medical Research

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action he proposes to take to help non-teaching hospitals that provide major service support for research by external funders.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to announce a £2 million scheme to help meet the service support costs of research in non-teaching hospitals. The scheme will give financial help to hospitals that provide service support for major levels of research activity by external funders including local and national charities and the Medical Research Council. Applications for support under the scheme will be invited for autumn 1991 and the first allocations made for April 1992. An NHS management executive letter will be issued to health authorities shortly and will give further details.

Myelograms

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what equipment currently available under the NHS is capable of determining whether or not myodil dye was used in the past; what is the location of each scanner; and what is its current availability for use.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* If myodil dye was used in the past for a myelogram its clearance from the body will vary from patient to patient. Normal radiographic X-ray equipment should detect any myodil still present in a patient's body.

ENERGY

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations he has had with the chairman of National Power and PowerGen concerning a staggered sale of the share capital; what estimates he has made of the difference in net proceeds from a 100 per cent. sale and a staggered sale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has decided to offer for sale 60 per cent. of the share capital of National Power and PowerGen next month, subject to market conditions. The chairmen of the companies have been informed of this decision, which reflects the Government's confidence in the long-term future of the companies and the wish to maximise proceeds in time.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what resources are allocated for a campaign to encourage home insulation as part of the energy efficiency project.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Energy Efficiency Office promotes energy efficiency measures in the domestic sector through a range of initiatives including the new home energy efficiency scheme, which came into operation on 1 January, provision of targeted information to householders, and the best practice programme. Of the total budget expected to be available to the EEO of nearly £42 million in 1991-92, some £30 million is in support of these programmes.

Electricity Cables

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will institute a feasibility study in co-operation with the electricity industry with a view to improving the overhead cable system and making it less vulnerable, particularly in rural areas, to severe snow and storm conditions.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A joint Department-electricity supply industry panel of inquiry chaired by the Department's chief engineering inspector was set up in January 1982 to investigate the adequacy, and so on, of overhead electricity lines following the very severe snow storms in December 1981 and January 1982 which seriously affected Wales and the west of England. As a result a programme of improvements was put in hand costing over £100 million, which included the strengthening of the more vulnerable overhead lines and closer control of tree growth. The snowstorm which affected the midlands area in December 1990 was exceptional, but the East Midlands Electricity company—the worst affected—is carrying out a review of the event and the Department's engineering inspectorate is monitoring this review.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the 12 chairs of the electricity consumer committees to discuss next year's forecast price increases for domestic consumers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The functioning of the electricity consumers' committees is a matter for the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Electricity Consumers

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has regarding the numbers of electricity consumers with average consumption slightly less than 1 MW, who have stepped up consumption just sufficiently to gain access to non-franchise purchasing terms.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The criteria for franchise customers are set out in condition 2 of the second tier supply licences issued to suppliers. This makes it clear that the relevant demand calculations must be on the basis of the average of the three highest months of maximum demand in a 12-month period under normal operating conditions. It is for the Director General of Electricity Supply to oversee the implementation of licence conditions and to determine any disputes over whether the criteria have been met.

Power Cables

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for a report on the problem of ice accretion on power cables and the threat it poses to security of supply.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The phenomenon of ice accumulation on overhead electric lines and other structures is well understood technically. Weather conditions and their effect on overhead electricity transmission and distribution systems, including ice accumulation and electricity supply industry design standards, were exhaustively addressed in the joint Department of Energy-industry review into the widespread storm damage in the west of Britain during the winter of 1981-82. The phenomenon is not confined to the United Kingdom and occurs in other countries, including other parts of Europe, with similar climatic conditions to our own.

The area of East Midlands Electricity was particularly badly affected last December. The company is carrying out a review of those events and the Department's engineering inspectors will be keeping closely in touch with it.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Levitt Group

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry who is responsible for making an announcement, and at what time he expects it to be made, concerning the safety and security of money placed by investors with the Levitt Group.

Mr. Redwood: I understand that the provisional liquidators reported to creditors on Monday 14 January.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the current position of the Levitt group and the safety of investors' moneys.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* I understand that the provisional liquidators reported to creditors on Monday 14 January.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many times company auditors have notified his Department of corporate fraud and irregularities.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not available in the form requested. To try to provide comprehensive information over a reasonable time period would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether the individuals criticised in the inspectors' report on Bryanston can still carry out company audits.

Mr. Redwood: In respect of accountants, yes, except for Mr. Keith Cunningham whose membership of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales has lapsed. The accountancy firm involved was required to pay costs of £273,000 and reprimanded under the joint disciplinary scheme.

Tottenham Hotspur plc

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what inquiries he has made into the suspension of shares of Tottenham Hotspur plc.

Mr. Redwood: The suspension of shares is a matter for the International Stock Exchange.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action he has taken or is proposing to take against Tottenham Hotspur plc for late filing of its annual accounts.

Mr. Redwood: Tottenham Hotspur plc has failed to submit accounts for the period ended 31 May 1990. The registrar has confirmed that the company has been notified of the default and appropriate action is being taken to secure compliance.

Suspension of Shares

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to propose legislation under which within six weeks of the share quotation being suspended the existing board of directors will be required to offer itself for re-election.

Mr. Redwood: No. If the shareholders of such a company wish to dismiss some or all of the directors they may requisition the convening of an extraordinary general meeting for that purpose under the provisions of section 368 of the Companies Act 1985.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will bring forward proposals for legislation to require a company whose share quotation is suspended to call an extraordinary meeting.

Mr. Redwood: No. Section 368 of the Companies Act 1985 already gives a company's shareholders the power to requisition an extraordinary general meeting if they consider one necessary.

Accounting Procedures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) whether he has any proposals for companies to write off purchased good will against profits rather than reserves;

(2) if he will propose legislation under which property companies would be prevented from capitalising the interest on their borrowings;

(3) what proposals he has for defining mergers and eliminating the anomalies arising from merger accounts.

Mr. Redwood: Issues of this sort are better dealt with through accounting standards than in the law. The matters raised are encompassed within exposure drafts issued by the Accounting Standards Committee and the responses received will be considered by the Accounting Standards Board in due course.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has for requiring every public company to establish an audit committee and to specify in the annual reports any changes in accounting practice and its implications for the future.

Mr. Redwood: The Government endorse the use of audit committees, but have no plans to impose them on companies through legislation. Companies must be free to decide for themselves whether such committees are appropriate to their circumstances.

The existing requirements of SSAP2 in respect of the disclosure by companies of the accounting policies they have adopted and of SSAP6 in respect of the disclosure of the effect of prior period adjustments arising when an accounting policy is changed already cover the question of accounting policies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has had with the professional accountancy bodies about the establishment of a review panel to examine the accounts of listed companies and to establish an urgent issues task force to clear up areas of anomaly and clarify accounting guidelines.

Mr. Redwood: My Department consulted the Consultative Committee of Accountancy Bodies fully about the implementation of the Dearing report, which recommended the creation of a review panel and an urgent issues task force.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to ask the Audit Commission to lay down guidelines for the accountancy profession on the auditing of company accounts.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy that the Export Credits Guarantee Department should continue to be based in the Crown offices at Cathays, Cardiff; and if he will list any obstacles that would need to be overcome for such a policy to be implemented in the long term.

Mr. Sainsbury: After the proposed privatisation of its insurance services group, ECGD's remaining operations will continue to be based in London and in various locations in Cardiff. It is ECGD's intention that, in respect of these remaining operations, it should retain a significant presence in Cardiff for the foreseeable future. I am not aware of any obstacles likely to prevent this. As regards the location of the insurance services group following privatisation, this would be a matter for the new management and owners.

Company Accounts

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to authorise a person under section 245c of the Companies Act 1985 for the purpose of making applications to court under section 245b in respect of accounts which it is alleged did not comply with the Act.

Mr. Redwood: Last week I made an order authorising the Financial Reporting Review Panel Ltd, a subsidiary of the Financial Reporting Council Ltd, for this purpose. The authorisation takes effect from 1 February. The relevant provisions of the Act apply to accounts for financial years starting on or after 23 December 1989. The review panel will be able to apply to the court for a declaration that a company's accounts did not comply with the Act and for an order requiring the directors to prepare revised accounts.

Research Council

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Research Council on 21 December 1990.

Mr. Leigh: My noble Friend the Minister for Industry represented Her Majesty's Government at the meeting of the Council of Ministers (Research) in Brussels on 21 December.

The Council agreed common positions on three specific programmes under the third framework programme for R and D 1990-94: "Environment, Telematics, and Marine Sciences and Technologies". It approved in principle the specific programme of life sciences and technologies for developing countries while asking the Committee of Permanent Representatives—COREPER—to consider further the technical annex of the programme. COREPER was also asked to examine the following programmes with a view to the possible adoption of common positions early in 1991: information technologies, communication technologies, industrial and materials technologies, and biomedicine and health.

RENAVAL Programme (Plymouth)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures his Department is taking as a result of the European Commission's approval of the RENAVAL programme for the Plymouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. Leigh: The RENAVAL programme enables the Department to introduce regional enterprise grants into the Plymouth travel-to-work area and this we shall do with immediate effect.

The programme is designed to support our regional policies of increasing competitiveness, encouraging innovation and business development and improving the skills of individuals.

Regional enterprise grants, up to £1 million in total, will be available to small firms employing fewer than 25 people for investment in new equipment and towards the costs of developing or improving products or processes.

I am sure that RENAVAL and the help now available under regional enterprise grants will be of enormous benefit to small businesses in the Plymouth area. It is a useful addition to the support already available under regional selective assistance and the enterprise initiative.

The grants will be administered from our Plymouth office. Regional selective assistance continues to be available to larger firms and consultancy support continues unchanged.

Life Companies

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has of the practice of life companies using policyholders' funds to acquire shares in a company to benefit the company and not the policyholders; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* Life companies have freedom to invest policyholders' funds for the benefit of the policyholders subject to the prudential regulation of my Department. Policyholders' funds must be applied with the intention of benefiting policyholders although not all investment decisions will turn out to be successful with the benefit of hindsight. The application of policyholders' funds with the intention of benefiting policyholders is a requirement of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 and failure to comply constitutes a criminal offence.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Czechoslovak Academic Links Project

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications have been received by the British Council for funding under the Czechoslovak academic links project; and how many applications have been approved to date.

Mrs. Chalker: To date, the British Council has received 65 applications for links with Czechoslovakia under the Czechoslovak academic links project which is funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office under the know-how fund. Of these 15, have been approved.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding has been made available by the Government's know-how funds for the links projects with *(a)* Czechoslovakia, *(b)* Poland and *(c)* Hungary in 1990-91; and how much has been allocated in respect of projects for each country to date.

Mrs. Chalker: The sums made available in 1990-91 under the know-how fund for the academic links projects in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary are £150,000, £150,000 and £100,000 respectively. To date £150,000 has been allocated under the Czechoslovak scheme, £143,000 under the Polish scheme and £94,514 under the Hungarian scheme.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice Her Majesty's Government are giving to British citizens in the middle east.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As a precautionary measure against the risk of war and the possibility of civil disturbance and terrorist attack in some countries, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has given the following advice to travellers and residents. The dangers to British nationals are being kept under constant review, and advice may change at any time.

Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon
Do not attempt to travel to these countries.

Bahrain, Qatar, Riyadh, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia
Visitors: those with business in Bahrain, Qatar and the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia and the cities of Riyadh and Tabuk should not be deterred from making *necessary* visits. They should register their arrival with the nearest British diplomatic mission and should tell the mission how long they expect to stay. Tourists and others whose visits are a matter of choice should defer their visits.
British Community: dependants are advised to leave these areas before the deadline of 15 January which has been set by the Security Council for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.

Elsewhere in Saudi Arabia; United Arab Emirates
Visitors: those with business to conduct should not be deterred from making *necessary* visits. Others whose visits are a matter of choice should defer their visits.
British Community: United Arab Emirates: dependants currently on leave or planning on taking leave should consider delaying their return until the situation becomes clearer.
Elsewhere in Saudi Arabia: no reason for dependants to leave provided this is not contrary to employers' policy.

Jordan, Yemen
Visitors: travellers are advised to defer visits to these countries if they can.
British Community: all British nationals whose continued presence is not essential should leave until the situation becomes clearer.

Israel and the Occupied Territories
Visitors: Travellers are advised to defer visits if they can.
British Community: British nationals should consider leaving if they have no essential reason for staying.

Algeria
Visitors: Travellers should defer their visit if they are able to do so.
British Community: British dependents are advised to leave Algeria until the situation becomes clearer; those who remain should keep a low profile and take sensible precautions against the risk of civil disturbance.

Morocco, Tunisia
Visitors: Travellers to Morocco and Tunisia should be aware of the risk of disturbances, particularly in cities.
British Community: Should keep a low profile and take sensible precautions against the possibility of civil disturbances.

Syria
Visitors: Travellers should keep in close touch with events and keep their plans under review. They should notify the British embassy in Damascus of their arrival.
British Community: Residents should maintain a low profile and avoid disturbances and public demonstrations.

Iran
Visitors: In the light of developments in the middle east

and the proximity of Iran to the area of possible conflict, visitors should keep their plans under review and stay in close touch with events. They should tell the British embassy in Tehran of their arrival. Travellers should consider postponing visits to south western parts of Iran.

British Community: British nationals resident in the area close to the Iraqi border and the Gulf should consider moving themselves, or their dependants, to safer parts of Iran.

Turkey

Visitors: There is no reason not to travel to Turkey. Travellers should be aware that the situation in the south-east of the country might be affected if there were to be hostilities in the Gulf. Visitors planning to travel to the area are advised to inform the British embassy in Ankara. Travellers should also be aware that there have been recent terrorist incidents in the provinces of Diyarbakir, Elazig, Mardin, Hakkari, Siirt and Simok.

British Community: British nationals resident in south-east Turkey are being advised to keep in close touch with the British embassy. Those who are particularly worried about the situation should consider moving away for the time being.

Karachi

Visitors: travellers should not be deterred from making necessary visits but should register their arrival with the deputy high commission.

British Community: no change to the advice, which is to keep a low profile and take sensible precautions against the possibility of civil disorder.

Bangladesh

Visitors: given the uncertainty surrounding the situation in the Gulf intending travellers should consider postponing their journey unless they have substantive business to undertake. Any visitors to Bangladesh should keep in close touch with the British high commission.

British Community: British citizens should continue to take special care particularly during the period 15 and 16 January. Those working for organisations with known British or American connections should also consider what additional precautions they should take both for themselves and their companies.

Kaduna

Visitors: travellers should not be deterred from making necessary visits but should inform the deputy high commission of their arrival. Overland travellers through Kano should maintain a low profile for the time being.

British Community: are advised to keep a low profile and take sensible precautions against the possibility of civil unrest.

Sudan

Visitors: In the light of recent developments in Sudan travellers should visit the country only if their journey is essential.

British Community: All British nationals resident in the Khartoum area whose continuing presence is not essential are advised to leave.

Egypt, Greece, Oman, Libya, Cyprus

Visitors: no reason for travellers to change their plans in the light of recent developments.

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement on the forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Fisheries Council will possibly meet on 17 January and may discuss 1991 total allowable catches and quotas, agreement between the EC and Norway, agreement between the EC and Sweden, agreement between the EC and the Faroes, agreement between the EC and NAFO, agreement between the EC and French Guyana, total allowable catches and quotas for Spanish and Portuguese waters, the 10th amendment to technical conservation measures, autonomous tariff quotas and tariff suspensions and the amendment to the structures regulation.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 21 and 22 January and will discuss the review of the sugar regime and the beef balance sheet. Other items which may be discussed are organic agricultural production, GATT beef quotas, GATT agriculture, GATT accompanying measures, presentation of 1991 agricultural prices proposals, fish hygiene and bivalve molluscs.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 28 January to conduct a multilateral surveillance of the economies of member states. It is likely that other items for discussion will include the abolition of fiscal frontiers and assistance to central and eastern Europe.

Gibraltar

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support Gibraltar has received from the European Community's structural funds.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Gibraltar is to receive £237,223 from the United Kingdom's 1990 European social fund allocation to finance training and just under £2 million —2·8 million ecu—from the European regional development fund to assist in the conversion of a warehouse into small business premises. These are the first awards that Gibraltar has received from the structural funds.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Blindness

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his Department has any plans to recompense for the additional costs of blindness those

claimants who are registered blind aged over 80 years and whose income support currently makes no provision in relation to their additional problems.

Miss Widdecombe: People who are registered blind and aged 60 years or more automatically qualify for the higher pensioner premium, which provides an extra £17·05 a week for single people and £24·25 a week for couples on top of their personal allowances. In addition, blind people can qualify for the severe disability premium, worth £28·20 a week, if they receive attendance allowance, nobody else lives with them and no one gets invalid care allowance in respect of their care. There are no plans to change these arrangements.

Food Vouchers

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if food vouchers are used as a suitable method of paying crisis loans in circumstances other than where the need has arisen because of the claimant's loss of money due to recklessness.

Mr. Scott: The power to make a payment out of the social fund under section 32(2)(b) of the Social Security Act 1986 may be exercised by making a payment to a third party with a view to the third party providing, or arranging for the provision of, goods or services to the applicant. The method of payment is a matter for consideration in the circumstances of each individual case. Information relating to the ways in which local offices make payments for crisis loans in individual cases is not available.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of crisis loans have been awarded as food vouchers for each month since April 1988 *(a)* nationally, *(b)* regionally and *(c)* in each of his Department's local office areas.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Deaf People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the new telephone line that will be set up to help disabled people claim benefits will include a minicom for deaf people.

Mr. Scott: The benefit inquiry line, which has been operating in Berkshire for a trial period of six months, includes the minicom facility for deaf people. Such a facility would be part of any extension to the system.

Community Charge (Strathclyde)

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list in respect of the 1989-90 community charge rebate scheme for Strathclyde regional council *(a)* how many applications have been received, *(b)* how many applications have been approved, *(c)* to how many applicants payment of rebate has been made and *(d)* how much in total has been paid out in rebates.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available. However, in December 1989 Strathclyde regional council estimated that its expenditure on community charge rebates in 1989-90 would be around £100 million and, in November 1989, 520,000 claimants were in receipt of a community charge rebate. Claims from couples are counted as one.

Source: 1. Housing and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System November 1989 quarterly stock count of claims.
2. Estimate of Community Charge Rebate expenditure prepared by Strathclyde Regional Council.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what age a child in normal physical and mental health will be regarded as not requiring guidance and supervision for the purposes of entitlement to the lower mobility component of disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 20 December 1990]:* We have no plans to specify the age at which children normally cease to require guidance or supervision. The aim is to compare the requirements of a disabled child under age 16 with those of a child of the same age in normal physical and mental health. These reduce as children grow older and the Bill currently before Parliament recognises that, eventually, a point is reached when a child in normal physical and mental health will no longer require any guidance or supervision.

WALES

Alcohol Misuse

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what factors influenced his decision on the timing of the announcement in respect of the criteria to be applied to applications from organisations seeking to develop local services in Wales for those involved in alcohol misuse.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The criteria set for bids for funding projects to combat alcohol misuse were primarily influenced by the experience gained in operating a similar central funding initiative in respect of drug misuse.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the reasons for the delays from the initial announcements of plans for a campaign to tackle alcohol misuse and from the announcement of the amount of cash available for his Department to make details available and to invite applications from organisations concerned with the provision of local services in Wales in respect of alcohol misuse.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Following the announcement that central resources were being made available to combat alcohol misuse, it was necessary to establish a framework within which expenditure would be utilised and to seek the views of local agencies as to how the resources might best be deployed.

Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any account will be taken of projected land sales in determining his Department's annual level of contribution to each health authority in Wales *(a)* in 1990-91, *(b)* in 1991-92 and *(c)* in subsequent years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: At present, district health authorities in Wales benefit from the proceeds of surplus land and buildings, unless the facilities become surplus as a consequence of a centrally funded development. In these

cases, the receipts are used to offset the cost of the development. No account is taken of the expected level of receipts in determining each health authority's share of capital funds, and authorities which are able to realise land sales have therefore benefited directly by the amounts raised enabling them to develop and improve health services. These arrangements, including the treatment of the receipts from surplus mental handicap and mental illness hospitals which should contribute to the development of alternative patterns of care, are described in the land transactions handbook.

Under the new arrangements proposed for capital funding for introduction in 1992-93, after a transitional period all proceeds from sales will be retained centrally and used to contribute to the cost of new developments. This is intended to ensure that the benefits from such sales should be used wherever they provide the best return in terms of health gain or improved efficiency. These arrangements are described in the consultation paper "The Health Service in Wales Implementing the White Paper: Capital Allocations" and copies are in the Library of the House. Because of the volume of capital developments that is currently in the pipeline or otherwise committed, and the time taken to complete new developments, the proposed arrangements would be phased in over a number of years. These transitional arrangements and details of the way in which it is decided that the new system should work will be announced in due course. However, for 1991-92, the current arrangements will continue to apply.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of their land sales will be retained by health authorities in Wales *(a)* in 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92 and *(c)* in 1992-93 and future financial years.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: District health authorities are currently entitled to retain and use the proceeds from the sale of land and buildings no longer needed by the health service except in those cases where the property has become surplus as a result of a closure following the provision of a centrally funded scheme. In such cases proceeds are returned to the all-Wales provision. Most receipts are retained by health authorities. The proportion of proceeds retained by health authorities in any year will depend on the particular sales which are completed during that year about which it is not possible to speculate.

These arrangements will continue in 1991-92. For 1992-93 and subsequent years, new arrangements for capital funding are in prospect. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him today on that subject.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each district health authority and special health authority in Wales for each of the last five years, 1985-86 to 1990-91, *(a)* the costs his Department considered in advance that the authority should achieve in efficiency savings, *(b)* the actual savings achieved and *(c)* the percentage of the previous year's (i) budget and (ii) actual expenditure represented by *(a)* and *(b)* in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Financial targets in respect of efficiency savings to be achieved through cost improvement in the NHS in Wales were first introduced in 1989-90. Monitoring of health authorities' cost improvement programmes began in 1988. Estimates of the new recurrent savings achieved by district health authorities and the Welsh health common services authority in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 are set out in the following table together with reported savings in 1988-89 and 1989-90 and the savings expected to be achieved in 1990-91. The cost improvement targets set for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are also shown. The equivalent information for the health promotion authority for Wales is not available.

Table 1: 1985-86

Health authority	*Recurring revenue efficiency savings achieved in 1985-86*[1] *(£000s)*	*Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1984-85 recurrent revenue allocations* *Per cent.*	*1984-85 revenue expenditure* *Per cent.*
Clwyd	824	1·2	1·2
East Dyfed	336	0·8	0·7
Gwent	797	0·9	0·9
Gwynedd	240	0·6	0·5
Mid Glamorgan	971	1·0	0·9
Pembrokeshire	107	0·7	0·7
Powys	205	1·0	1·0
South Glamorgan	1,176	1·0	1·0
West Glamorgan	361	0·5	0·5
Welsh health common services authority	10	0·2	0·2

[1] New recurring savings estimated to have been achieved in 1985-86 at the time an efficiency scrutiny of cash-releasing cost improvements in the NHS in Wales was conducted in 1988.

Table 2: 1986-87

Health authority	*Recurring revenue efficiency savings achieved in 1986-87*[1] *£000*	*Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1985-86 recurrent revenue allocations* *per cent.*	*1985-86 revenue expenditure* *per cent.*
Clwyd	95	0·1	0·1
East Dyfed	602	1·3	1·3
Gwent	903	1·0	1·0
Gwynedd	234	0·5	0·5
Mid Glamorgan	1,045	1·0	0·9
Pembrokeshire	386	2·3	2·4
Powys	236	1·1	1·1
South Glamorgan	1,365	1·1	1·1
West Glamorgan	507	0·7	0·7
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	35	0·8	0·7

[1] New recurring savings estimated to have been achieved in 1986-87 at the time an efficiency scrutiny of cash-releasing cost improvements in the National Health Service in Wales was conducted in 1988.

Table 3: 1987-88

Health authority	Recurring revenue efficiency savings achieved in 1987-88[1] (£000s)	Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1986-87 recurrent revenue allocations (Per cent.)	1986-87 revenue expenditure (Per cent.)
Clwyd	260	0·3	0·3
East Dyfed	518	1·0	1·0
Gwent	661	0·7	0·7
Gwynedd	654	1·3	1·3
Mid Glamorgan	1,563	1·3	1·3
Pembrokeshire	98	0·5	0·6
Powys	123	0·5	0·5
South Glamorgan	963	0·7	0·7
West Glamorgan	1,073	1·3	1·3
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	30	0·6	0·5

[1] New recurring savings estimated to have been achieved in 1987-88 at the time an efficiency scrutiny of cash-releasing cost improvements in the National Health Service in Wales was conducted in 1988.

Table 4: 1988-89

Health authority	Recurring revenue efficiency savings achieved in 1988-89[1] (£000s)	Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1987-88 recurrent revenue allocations percentage	1987-88 revenue expenditure percentage
Clwyd	909	1·0	1·0
East Dyfed	1,157	2·1	2·0
Gwent	1,791	1·7	1·6
Gwynedd	639	1·2	1·1
Mid Glamorgan	1,759	1·4	1·3
Pembrokeshire	311	1·5	1·6
Powys	146	0·6	0·6
South Glamorgan	1,027	0·7	0·7
West Glamorgan	802	0·9	0·9
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	8	0·1	0·1

[1] New recurring savings reported by health authorities.

Table 5: 1989-90

Health authority	Cash releasing cost improvement target (£000s)	Target as a percentage of: 1988-89 recurrent revenue allocations (Per cent.)	1988-89 revenue expenditure (Per cent.)	Recurring revenue efficiency savings achieved in 1989-90[1] (£000s)	Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1988-89 recurrent revenue allocations (Per cent.)	1988-89 revenue expenditure (Per cent.)
Clwyd	1,170	1·2	1·1	710	0·7	0·7
East Dyfed	741	1·2	1·2	1,116	1·9	1·7
Gwent	1,392	1·2	1·1	1,347	1·2	1·1
Gwynedd	701	1·2	1·1	492	0·9	0·8
Mid Glamorgan	1,638	1·2	1·1	1,355	1·1	0·9
Pembrokeshire	279	1·2	1·2	249	1·1	1·1
Powys	334	1·2	1·2	267	1·0	0·9
South Glamorgan	1,870	1·2	1·1	1,702	1·1	1·0
West Glamorgan	1,205	1·2	1·2	1,069	1·1	1·0
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	87	1·4	0·9	43	0·7	0·4

[1] New recurring savings reported by health authorities.

Table 6: 1990-91

Health authority	Cash releasing cost improvement target	Target as a percentage of: 1989-90 recurrent revenue allocations	Target as a percentage of: 1989-90 revenue expenditure	Estimated recurring revenue efficiency savings in 1990-91[1]	Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1989-90 recurrent revenue allocations	Recurring savings as a percentage of: 1989-90 revenue expenditure
	(£000s)	(Per cent.)	(Per cent.)	(£000s)	(Per cent.)	(Per cent.)
Clwyd	1,282	1·2	1·2	1,338	1·3	1·2
East Dyfed	824	1·2	1·2	939	1·4	1·4
Gwent	1,518	1·2	1·2	1,746	1·4	1·3
Gwynedd	761	1·2	1·1	717	1·1	1·1
Mid Glamorgan	1,776	1·2	1·2	1,679	1·1	1·1
Pembrokeshire	312	1·2	1·2	344	1·4	1·3
Powys	367	1·2	1·2	666	2·2	2·2
South Glamorgan	2,079	1·2	1·1	2,016	1·2	1·1
West Glamorgan	1,312	1·2	1·2	1,212	1·1	1·1
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	94	1·2	0·9	50	0·7	0·5

[1]Estimated new recurring savings reported by health authorities.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing how much has been spent *(a)* by the Welsh Office itself and *(b)* by each health authority in Wales on training for the people recently appointed by him to the new health authority boards.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 14 January 1991.

Bronllys Hospital

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will investigate Powys health authority's inability recently to find money for a replacement washing machine for ward D at Bronllys hospital.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Powys health authority advises that no request has been made for a washing machine to be located on Defynnog ward.

Llangoed Hall

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will order an investigation into Powys health authority's expenditure on a weekend at Llangoed Hall near Brecon.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No; this is a matter for Powys health authority.

Laura Ashley Factory, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the future of the Laura Ashley factory at Leeswood, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: The WDA is continuing its efforts to work with Laura Ashley to find purchasers. Detailed discussions are currently taking place with at least one interested company. My Department is being kept closely informed.

School Curriculum

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the national curriculum for pupils from the age of 14 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We intend to make a statement shortly.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the teaching of *(a)* arts and music, *(b)* technology, *(c)* history and *(d)* geography from the age of 14 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We intend to make a statement shortly.

Industrial Development, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his plans to assist the development of the Warren Hall, Broughton, Clwyd site for modern industry.

Mr. David Hunt: I am advised that the Welsh Development Agency is exploring the possibility of a partnership development with the owners to bring the land forward for business use.

Castle Cement Factory, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the Castle Cement factory, Clwyd, to meet the work force.

Mr. David Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I met a delegation from Castle Cement on 18 December.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he will take concerning the proposed loss of jobs at the Castle Cement factory, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: It is very much regretted that the company consider it necessary to take such steps. The Welsh Development Agency will take these proposed job losses into account in planning its future activities and will review its plans in the light of continuing developments.

Roads

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the initiatives taken to advance the construction of the relief road of Shotton and Connah's Quay and the proposed new road bridge over the River Dee.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The timing of the scheme is a matter for Clwyd county council as the responsible highway authority. Preparation costs have been accepted for transport grant support in 1991-92.

Owens-Corming, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action he proposes consequent upon the loss of jobs at Owens-Corming at Llay, Clwyd.

Mr. David Hunt: These job losses are very much regretted. The Welsh Development Agency will take these job losses into account in planning its future activities and will review its plans in the light of continuing developments.

Water Charges

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sanctions are available to him if the guidelines and criteria produced by the Director General of Water Services on methods of charging for water are disregarded.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 14 January]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him on 14 January by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment.

SCOTLAND

Noble Organisation

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has considered the terms of the judgment of dismissal given by the Court of Session on 7 December of the appeal by Glasgow district council in the matter of the provision of an entertainments licence to the Noble Organisation at premises in Duke street, Glasgow; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The terms of the Court of Session's judgment in this case have been noted. The Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 is to be the subject of a consultative review next year and interested parties will have the opportunity to submit representations on the operation of its provisions.

Business Rates

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of non-payment of business rates for the years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not available centrally.

Rural Communities

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what level of resources will be provided for the rural communities of Scotland in the 1991-92 financial year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The components of expenditure programmes which are relevant to rural areas are not separately identified.

Gipsy Sites

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all established gipsy sites in Scotland, indicating when they were established at each site.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The travelling people's sites run by local authorities in Scotland are listed in the table. In addition to them, it is estimated that around 240 pitches are regularly used by travelling people on privately run sites.

Local Authority	*Location*	*Established*
Permanent Sites		
Aberdeen	Clinterty, Aberdeen	November 1982
Angus	Tayock, Montrose	November 1980
Argyll and Bute	Dunchologan, Lochgilphead	December 1978
Argyll and Bute	Torlochan, Dunoon	December 1984
Banff and Buchan[1]	Greenbanks, Banff	May 1989
Clackmannan	Westhaugh, Alva	December 1984
Cumnock and Doon Valley[2]	Auchinleck, Cumnock	Early 1980s
Cunninghame	Merkland Bridge, Arran	September 1982
Cunninghame	Redburn, Irvine	July 1989
Dumbarton	Dennystown, Dumbarton	July 1981
East Kilbride	Springbank, East Kilbride	April 1990
Edinburgh	Duddingston, Edinburgh	August 1983
Falkirk	Redding, Falkirk	June 1985
Glasgow	Carmyle, Glasgow	June 1985
Glasgow	Rodney Street, Port Dundas	April 1990
Hamilton	Swinhill, Larkhall	January 1987
Inverness	Longman, Inverness	September 1985
Kyle and Carrick	Houdston Farm, Girvan	February 1989
Lochaber	Aonachan, Spean Bridge	September 1989
Monklands	Annathill, Glenboig	August 1989
Motherwell	Mossend, Bellshill	April 1982
North East Fife	Tarvit Mill, Cupar	May 1988
Perth and Kinross	Double Dykes, Perth	December 1982
Renfrew	Oldbarhills, Hurlet, Barrhead	November 1989
Tweedale[2]	Kilnknowe, Innerleithen	Early 1980s
Temporary Site		
Stirling	Craigforth, Stirling	January 1984

[1] Seasonal site.
[2] Local authority caravan site.

Opencast Mining

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many planning applications refused by local authorities regarding opencast mining have been upheld by the Scottish Office; and if he will give this information in percentage terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities assumed responsibilities for approving proposals for opencast coal mining on 11 December 1987. Since then my right hon. Friend has determined seven appeals against refusal of permission and has upheld three (43 per cent.)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from the Law Mining Company concerning its planning application for opencast coal reserves at Townhead, near Rigside, within Clydesdale constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The company's planning appeal concerning its application to extract coal and fireclay by opencast operations at Townhead near Rigside is due to be heard at a public inquiry in Rigside village hall, commencing on 29 January. As this appeal is to be determined by the chief reporter, under delegated powers, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that it would not be

appropriate for me to comment on the merits or otherwise of the proposals, but he may be assured that before reaching a decision the reporter will give all aspects of the matter the most careful consideration.

New St. Andrew's House

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to removing the Scottish Office from New St. Andrew's house to alternative accommodation in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: In the light of the work needed to remove asbestos from New St. Andrew's house and refurbish the building consideration is being given to a number of options for the longer-term accommodation strategy of the Scottish Office. No decisions have yet been taken.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of the renovation work required to upgrade the Scottish Office premises at New St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh recommended by the Property Services Agency report.

Mr. Lang: As part of the reinstatement of the building after removal of asbestos Property Holdings would propose to refurbish the building to a high standard. The report by PSA Building Management, which was commissioned by Property Holdings, sets out a number of options for additional enhancement of the building, the total cost of which if they were implemented would amount to some £5 million, excluding fees and VAT.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is proposed to evacuate all staff employed at New St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh while the asbestos is removed.

Mr. Lang: The work programme for the removal of asbestos is still under consideration.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of removing all asbestos from the Scottish Office at New St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: The report commissioned by Property Holdings estimates the cost of removing the asbestos and reinstating the building to an appropriate standard as between £6·3 million and £8·6 million, excluding fees and VAT, depending on the work programme adopted.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost of the improvement to the ventilation system at the Scottish Office at New St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh.

Mr. Lang: A number of possible alternative ways in which the heating, ventilation and air conditioning in New St. Andrew's house might be improved are under consideration; accurate cost figures cannot be given at this stage.

Non-domestic Rates

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on non-domestic rates for 1991-92.

Mr. Lang: As a result of our policy of reducing Scottish business rate poundages to the level of the English national non-domestic rate, Scottish businesses will pay £58 million less in rates next year than they otherwise would have done. This is a reduction of almost 5 per cent. The total reduction due to this policy and our earlier decision to limit increases in poundages to no more than inflation from 1989-90 onwards is £230 million. That saving has been of great value to Scottish business and therefore to investment and employment levels.

The reduction of £58 million is larger than had been allowed for in drawing up the spending plans we made last year and £48 million of it will be met by increased revenue support grant to local authorities. Local authorities are being asked to contribute the remaining £10 million through efficiency savings.

The table shows the rate poundage which I intend to prescribe for each local authority in regulations that I shall lay before Parliament this week.

I am aware that Scottish business would like us to make faster progress towards full harmonisation, but we have to balance the costs of funding this policy with the pressures on the taxpayer and with the level of community charges. The decision to reduce business rates and to increase revenue support grant next year beyond our original plans at a time when resources are scarce does, I believe, demonstrate the high priority that we give to it. We remain committed to eliminating the difference between Scotland and England over the same timetable as the national non-domestic rate is phased in south of the border.

As last year, the reduction in poundages will be accompanied by an associated reduction in derating: from 35 to 32 per cent. Also as last year, this will apply across the board to all authorities in Scotland. However, a number of representations have been made to my Department suggesting, for example, that reductions in rates should be made differently in future, in order to give earlier benefits to higher-rated areas, or that a single level of derating for manufacturing and freight industry is particularly generous in those areas which have relatively low rates. I shall be reviewing these matters and our progress towards harmonisation, including the powers available to me, during the coming year to see whether a different approach might be adopted in future. In this context I will welcome the views of interested bodies.

	1 *1990-91 Poundages*	*2* *1991-92 Pre-NNDR Reduction*	*3* *1991-92 Poundages*	*4* *1991-92 Poundages at Ratepayer Level*	*5* *Reduction to Ratepayer*
Borders	36·0	39·9	37·9		
Central	41·7	46·2	43·9		
Dumfries and Galloway	38·3	42·5	40·4		
Fife	46·1	51·1	48·6		
Grampian	34·2	37·9	36·0		
Highland	41·3	45·8	43·5		

	1 1990-91 Poundages	*2* 1991-92 Pre-NNDR Reduction	*3* 1991-92 Poundages	*4* 1991-92 Poundages at Ratepayer Level	*5* Reduction to Ratepayer
Lothian	47·5	52·7	50·0		
Strathclyde	46·0	51·0	48·5		
Tayside	43·0	47·7	45·3		
Berwickshire	7·5	8·3	7·9	45·8	2·4
Ettrick and Lauderdale	8·5	9·4	9·0	46·9	2·4
Roxburgh	9·4	10·4	9·9	47·8	2·5
Tweeddale	7·2	8·0	7·6	45·5	2·4
Clackmannan	14·9	16·5	15·7	59·6	3·1
Falkirk	12·2	13·5	12·9	56·8	2·9
Stirling	18·1	20·1	19·1	63·0	3·3
Annandale and Eskdale	9·1	10·1	9·6	50·0	2·6
Nithsdale	9·1	10·1	9·6	50·0	2·6
Stewartry	7·9	8·8	8·3	48·7	2·6
Wigtown	7·4	8·2	7·8	48·2	2·5
Dunfermline	10·1	11·2	10·6	59·2	3·1
Kirkcaldy	12·6	14·0	13·3	61·9	3·2
North East Fife	11·3	12·5	11·9	60·5	3·1
Aberdeen City	11·0	12·2	11·6	47·6	2·5
Banff and Buchan	9·8	10·9	10·3	46·3	2·5
Gordon	7·9	8·8	8·3	44·3	2·4
Kincardine and Deeside	6·5	7·2	6·8	42·8	2·3
Moray	8·2	9·1	8·6	44·6	2·4
Badenoch and Strathspey	6·3	7·0	6·6	50·1	2·7
Caithness	9·8	10·9	10·3	53·8	2·9
Inverness	7·5	8·3	7·9	51·4	2·7
Lochaber	11·4	12·6	12·0	55·5	2·9
Nairn	6·3	7·0	6·6	50·1	2·7
Ross and Cromarty	9·8	10·9	10·3	53·8	2·9
Skye and Lochalsh	9·4	10·4	9·9	53·4	2·8
Sutherland	7·1	7·9	7·5	51·0	2·7
East Lothian	13·4	14·9	14·1	64·1	3·5
Edinburgh City	13·1	14·5	13·8	63·8	3·4
Midlothian	13·4	14·9	14·1	64·1	3·5
West Lothian	11·8	13·1	12·4	62·4	3·4
Argyll and Bute	14·9	16·5	15·7	64·2	3·3
Bearsden and Milngavie	10·3	11·4	10·9	59·4	3·0
Clydebank	15·3	17·0	16·1	64·6	3·4
Clydesdale	13·2	14·6	13·9	62·4	3·2
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	13·0	14·4	13·7	62·2	3·2
Cumnock and Doon Valley	13·4	14·9	14·1	62·6	3·3
Cunninghame	16·1	17·9	17·0	65·5	3·4
Dumbarton	14·9	16·5	15·7	64·2	3·3
East Kilbride	11·2	12·4	11·8	60·3	3·1
Eastwood	7·9	8·8	8·3	56·8	3·0
Glasgow City	20·9	23·2	22·0	70·5	3·7
Hamilton	14·2	15·7	15·0	63·5	3·2
Inverclyde	12·6	14·0	13·3	61·8	3·2
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	13·0	14·4	13·7	62·2	3·2
Kyle and Carrick	13·4	14·9	14·1	62·6	3·3
Monklands	14·2	15·7	15·0	63·5	3·2
Motherwell	12·9	14·3	13·6	62·1	3·2
Renfrew	14·2	15·7	15·0	63·5	3·2
Strathkelvin	12·6	14·0	13·3	61·8	3·2
Angus	10·6	11·8	11·2	56·5	3·0
Dundee City	16·9	18·7	17·8	63·1	3·3
Perth and Kinross	11·0	12·2	11·6	56·9	3·0
Orkney	39·3	43·6	41·4	41·4	2·2
Shetland	37·1	41·1	39·1	39·1	2·0
Western Isles	57·6	63·9	60·7	60·7	3·2

Landfill Gas

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what support is being given to local authorities, other than urging them to act on the recommendations on waste management paper No. 27 "The Control of Landfill Gas" on sites other than those which are commercially viable.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* It is for local authorities to make my right hon. Friend aware of their need to incur expenditure on the control of landfill gas, through their financial plans. Where authorities have identified gas control schemes in their plans, priority has been given to these schemes when consent allocations have been determined.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the landfill sites at which energy recovery is *(a)* now under way and *(b)* being considered for the future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* We are not aware of any sites in Scotland where energy recovery is practised. Information on current and planned operations may be obtained from the district and islands councils which are responsible for regulating waste disposal activities, but they may not be aware of future plans of private operators whose proposals may be commercially confidential.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Satellite Television

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what would be the cost of installing satellite Sky television in a special viewing room in the House; and if he will make arrangements to do so after the Christmas recess;

(2) what consideration has been given to making it possible to watch satellite television in the television rooms.

Mr. MacGregor: The fourth report of the Services Committee of last Session (HC 614) states that, while access by Members to satellite and terrestrial television should be accepted in principle, no action should be taken to implement the introduction of that facility until the feasibility and cost of installing a broad-band telecommunications network for the Palace is known. The report calls for urgent communications to identify the type and capacity of cable required for the transmission of all forms of electronic data.

Text Telephones

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Lord President of the Council what consideration has been given to the installation of minicoms, or text telephones, in the House to enable deaf people to contact their Members of Parliament and Members of Parliament to contact their deaf constituents.

Mr. MacGregor: Text telephones for the assistance of deaf persons are not in use within the House of Commons at present. I am arranging for the matter to be looked into.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Achievements

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the achievements of Her Majesty's Government since 1987.

The Prime Minister: Since 1987 the Government have continued to build upon the changes begun in 1979, to strengthen the economy, foster a spirit of enterprise and improve living standards.

Sterling has been brought into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system, reinforcing the Government's strict anti-inflationary policy. Output is 8 per cent. higher. Investment has grown faster than at any time since the second world war. Taxes have been reformed. Privatisation of 29 more major businesses has taken place and 24 per cent. of the adult population now own shares. The Government have exercised strict control of public expenditure—general Government expenditure has been brought below 40 per cent. of GDP for the first time since 1966-67. Almost £30 billion of public debt will have been repaid by the end of the current financial year. Over 2 million more people are in work than in 1987.

In the public services we have improved efficiency, safeguarded quality and enhanced safety. Key themes, reflected in the reform of the health service, in housing policy and in education have been to increase choice and to encourage people to take personal responsibility for their well-being and that of their families.

The Government have striven to improve the quality of life of all the British people. A number of special initiatives have focused on those living in inner cities. The Government have played a leading role in developing environmental protection, nationally and internationally.

The Government have maintained a firm commitment to national defence and the NATO alliance. We have supported and contributed to NATO's efforts to establish closer relations with the Soviet Union and with the countries of eastern Europe. The United Kingdom has played an important role in securing firm reaction of the United Nations in dealing with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. We have played a positive role in the building of the single market in the European Community.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) *Official Report*, 18 December, column *165*, what further investigation of the common agricultural policy he expects the EC to make; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The common agricultural policy is likely to be subject to a period of further reform as a result of renewed production and expenditure pressure and the outcome of the current GATT negotiations. The Commission's 1991-92 price proposals are likely to incorporate a first instalment of these reforms.

GATT

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, further to his statement on 18 December, *Official Report*, column 157, whether the remit for the EC negotiations in the GATT talks has been altered by the recent Heads of Government meeting.

The Prime Minister: The meeting of European Heads of Government asked the Commission, which negotiates on behalf of the Community, to intensify its contacts with other participants in order to resolve outstanding problems.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column 1108, on what basis he calculates the figure of a loss of three quarters of a million jobs through the establishment of a national minimum wage.

The Prime Minister: Officials in the Department of Employment have estimated that a national minimum wage set at half male median earnings will result in the loss of about three quarters of a million jobs. This estimate uses earnings information from the new earnings survey and information on the relationship between real wages and

employment set out in the published Treasury paper "The Relationship Between Employment and Wages: Empirical Evidence for the United Kingdom" (HM Treasury, January 1985).

A detailed explanation of the method was placed in the House of Commons Library on 2 February 1990—"Estimating the Effect of a National Minimum Wage".

Publicity and Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister, further to his reply on 17 December, *Official Report*, c. *15*, if he will list the Government conventions regarding the use of paid publicity and advertising within which expenditure on advertising in the press, television and other forms of publicity is a matter for departmental Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The conventions on Government publicity and advertising have already been published. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy on 28 June 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) at column *311*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Staff (Salaries)

13. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the current salary levels of university staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend received a delegation from the Association of University Teachers on 11 December 1990. I myself received representatives of the union on 20 November. At these meetings a number of issues, including salary levels, were raised.

Youth Service Organisations

14. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from youth service organisations concerning proposals for a core curriculum of activities.

Mr. Atkins: We have received a number of representations on the core curriculum following the first and second ministerial conferences with the youth service. The Government will take account of the comments received in responding to the recommendations of the second ministerial conference. I shall send my hon. Friend a copy of that response in due course.

Educational Provision

15. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards eliminating surplus places and rationalising educational provisions.

Mr. Eggar: It is for local education authorities to bring forward proposals for rationalising their school provision. My right hon. and learned Friend and his predecessors have repeatedly urged LEAs to do more to remove wasteful surplus places.

Sport (Drugs)

16. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss means to discourage the use of drugs in sport.

Mr. Atkins: I already meet the chairman of the Sports Council at regular intervals to discuss issues of mutual concern, including the misuse of drugs in sport.

University Funding

17. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers on university funding.

20. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received from the Association of University Teachers on university funding.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received copies of the association's recent publications, and met a deputation from the association on 11 December.

Vocational Education

18. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the Business and Technical Education Council to discuss vocational education.

Mr. Eggar: I met representatives of the council on 21 November to discuss vocational education. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to meet them in the spring.

Schools Budget

19. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what variation there is between local education authorities in the proportion of education budgets delegated to schools under local management of schools.

25. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the proportion of the schools budget which local education authorities are holding back for central control.

Mr. Fallon: The proportion of the potential schools budget delegated to schools varies from 89·10 per cent. in the LEA delegating the most, to 77·97 per cent. in the LEA delegating the least. This wide variation is unacceptable and we are determined that LEAs should delegate more. We have recently proposed that LEAs should delegate at least 85 per cent. of the potential schools budget by 1 April 1993.

Secondary School Libraries

21. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when was the last occasion on which Her Majesty's inspector of schools investigated the state of secondary school libraries.

Mr. Fallon: Her Majesty's inspectorate's most recent report on secondary school libraries was published in January 1990 and covered 58 secondary schools in six local education authorities.

Bradford City Technology College

22. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total amount, to the most recent practicable date, spent on grant aid by his Department on the city technology college in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Total grant aid to Bradford city technology college up to 31 December was £7·8 million. This total includes management, capital and running costs.

Teacher Recruitment

23. **Mr. Tredinick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last discussed teacher recruitment in Leicestershire; what were his conclusions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fallon: Leicestershire local education authority requested grant support for £150,000 of expenditure on teacher recruitment in 1991-92; the authority was informed last month that this bid will be met in full, as part of the grant support announced by my right hon. and learned Friend on 18 December, at columns *122-23*. A similar amount will be available in 1992-93. This funding reflects the Department's commitment to assist authorities in the development of initiatives to improve teacher recruitment.

Sixth-form Colleges

24. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications he has received from sixth-form colleges seeking to obtain grant-maintained status.

Mr. Eggar: None so far.

Daily Worship

26. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the number of schools holding a daily act of collective worship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under the Education Reform Act all maintained schools are required to provide daily collective worship for all registered pupils, except those pupils withdrawn by their parents.

Sport

27. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Government's policy towards sport in schools.

Mr. Atkins: Physical education, which includes sport, will be a compulsory part of the curriculum in all maintained schools for the first time under the requirements of the national curriculum. All pupils of compulsory school age will be required to participate in a programme of physical education throughout all the key stages of the national curriculum.

As part of the Government's current review of their policies towards sport and active recreation, we are also looking at other ways in which children of school age can be encouraged to participate in sport both during and outside school hours, including through the further promotion of links between schools and local sports clubs.

Further Education

28. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to the setting of targets for participation in full and part-time education and training for 16 to 19-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend's objective is to raise both the proportion of 16 to 19-year-olds taking part in full and part-time education and training, and their levels of attainment. The Government are making good progress in both respects as a result of the recent school reforms, the introduction of pilot training credit schemes, and the many growing links between education and industry. They expect to see further improvements in participation rates in the 1990s as a result of the introduction of the national curriculum.

English and Mathematics

29. **Mrs. Currie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of 15 and 16-year-olds achieved an A, B or C pass in *(a)* GCSE English and *(b)* GCSE mathematics for the most recent year available.

Mr. Eggar: Of the pupils eligible to take GCSE examinations in year 11 in 1988-89, 45 per cent. gained grades A to C in GCSE English and 34 per cent. in mathematics.

Deaf Children

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans his Department has to research and monitor the literary attainment of deaf children in mainstream schools and special units.

Mr. Fallon: The Department has no plans to undertake any specific research in this area. However, unless statutory exceptions have been made, the literary attainments of deaf children in ordinary schools and special units will be assessed, as for all children, under the arrangements for the national curriculum.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what guidance his Department has issued to inner London boroughs on the provision of special youth work provision for young deaf people to replace that previously provided by the Inner London education authority.

Mr. Atkins: No special guidance has been issued to individual inner London boroughs. Following the abolition of the Inner London education authority, the Department is providing interim support of £500,000 per annum for each of the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 to the Londonwide voluntary education organisations. Friends for the Young Deaf has benefited from this arrangement, as have organisations such as SENSE, PHAB and Gateway.

TEMPUS Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the European Council of Ministers intends to extend the TEMPUS scheme to promote the development of the higher education systems

in the countries of central and eastern Europe to countries in addition to Poland and Hungary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The European Community has already approved the extension of the TEMPUS programme to the former German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia in academic year 1990-91, and in principle to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria in 1991-92. The Community would consider extensions to other central and eastern European countries if they requested it.

Teacher Assessment

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional funding is to be made available to meet the additional cost of teacher assessment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I shall support through education support grants £10 million of spending on school teacher appraisal in England in 1991-92 and at least £10 million in 1992-93. The figures for subsequent years will be set in due course.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 16 January 1991

TRANSPORT

Urban Clearway

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list any differences between the regulations applying to the existing clearways in the Greater London area and those being used in the current red route experiment.

Mr. Chope: Urban clearways are subject to a blanket prohibition on parking and loading at peak periods. Drivers can stop at any time to pick up and set down passengers. Clearway regulations are applied only to stretches of road where this uniform treatment is appropriate. The pilot red route traffic orders provide for differing treatment along the whole of the route to fit road conditions and local requirements. Where necessary, there is a total ban on stopping. Elsewhere, there is provision for parking, waiting and loading at certain times. Waiting and loading bays are marked in the road, with frequent signs indicating times of application.

Channel Tunnel

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make it his policy to require the operators of the channel tunnel to segregate passengers and vehicles during transit.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for the design, construction and safe operation of the tunnel system rests with Eurotunnel. All of Eurotunnel's designs and operating procedures are subject to the approval of the Channel Tunnel Intergovernmental Commission—IGC—which is advised on safety matters by the independent Channel Tunnel Safety Authority—SA. Both are binational bodies established by the treaty of Canterbury.

In December 1989 the IGC decided that Eurotunnel could continue to develop its transport system on the basis that coach and private car passengers would not be segregated from their vehicles during transit through the tunnel. With regard to safety aspects of their decision, the IGC took the advice of the SA that non-segregation would be acceptable subject to a number of binding requirements. Copies of the IGC's decision and the SA's note of March 1990 reviewing the principal factors on which their advice was based, were placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects to initiate the red route experiment in east London; over what lengths of road it will operate; and how many person hours per day or per week he estimates will be spent in its operation.

Mr. Chope: The red route pilot scheme in east London is entirely on local authority roads, from the Angel to Butcher row. A distance of some 3·5 miles is involved plus certain measures on adjacent roads. The local authorities concerned are expecting to install the scheme over the next few months beginning in February on the Aldgate and Commercial road stretch. The effort to be applied to enforcement maintenance, and fine tuning of the measures will depend on experience of their operation. Estimating the resource requirements is one of the objectives of the pilot scheme.

High-speed Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now take active steps to ensure or to investigate the options that would provide a high-grade, high-speed rail link to the City and the west end, in addition to that already planned for Paddington.

Mr. Freeman: The east-west crossrail, which was given approval by the Department of Transport on 9 October 1990, will link the City and the west end to Paddington and the express link to Heathrow. BR and its partners are also considering whether crossrail might be used to provide through services from the City and the west end to Heathrow.

Cross-London Rail Tunnel

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now take steps to ensure that land in the areas of Stratford and Paddington which could be used for a cross-London railway tunnel is safeguarded for planning purposes by the relevant planning authorities as part of their responsibilities for strategic planning.

Mr. Freeman: Directions to safeguard the alignment of the proposed east-west crossrail were issued by authority of the Secretary of State on 5 November 1990.

Road Widening, Brixton

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to widen the main London-Brighton road at Brixton road near the junction with Atlantic road.

Mr. Chope: None. This is a local road for which the London borough of Lambeth is the highway authority.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Borrowing

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy objective of central Government control of local authority capital borrowing.

Mr. Key: Local authority capital expenditure, which is mainly financed by borrowing, amounts to nearly one third of all public sector capital expenditure. Regulation of local authority borrowing is, therefore, an important factor in the Government's control of public expenditure.

Community Charge

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the number of extra staff taken on by local authorities in England and Wales for the collection and administration of the community charge; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

Mr. Key: It is estimated that about 15,000 extra staff have been taken on by local authorities in England and Wales for the collection and administration of the community charge. No individual authority breakdown is available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his replies of 26 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *259* and 12 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *434*, if he will publish the information for those local authorities for which information is missing from the material deposited in the Library.

Mr. Key: One local authority has sent in information to my Department and another has revised its figures since the previous answer I gave to the hon. Member.

	Authority	
	Blaby	*Mid Suffolk*
Number of people who have made a payment in respect of a personal community charge by 30 September 1990	45,000	55,693
Number of people liable who have not made a payment in respect of a personal community charge by 30 September 1990	17,000	2,939
Proportion of charge payers making a payment (per cent.)	72·6	95·0

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much the estimated 1991-92 average community charge would be reduced if *(a)* education and *(b)* education, fire and police were financed through central Government funding, with no change in the grants paid by central Government to the local authorities.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer, 15 January 1991]:* On 31 October 1990 the Secretary of State issued a consultation paper on revenue support grant for 1991-92 and related matters. The Secretary of State's proposals included net revenue expenditure to provide a standard level of service of £17,135·7 million for education, £2,352·9 million for police and £1,020·6 million for fire and civil defence services. If all authorities spent at the level of their standard spending assessment, he proposed that their income from community charges should be £12,972 million.

If central Government were to fund education spending in line with these proposals, with no change in the amounts on non-domestic rates, and revenue support grant paid to local authorities, there would be no need for a community charge as the extra government funding would exceed the proposed community charge income.

Correspondence

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich, dated 26 July 1990, regarding the National Association of Chimney Sweeps.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend's office wrote to the hon. Member on 14 August pointing out to her that her letter had been transferred to the Department of Trade and Industry as the subject was primarily a matter for that Department.

DEFENCE

The Gulf

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution is being made by Saudi Arabia and other states towards the maintenance of the British forces in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: An agreement was signed with Saudi Arabia yesterday, confirming the provision of free food, water, fuel, accommodation and transport for our forces. Other countries in the Gulf where our forces are stationed, our allies in the Western European Union, and other nations are providing a range of practical assistance and we are continuing to discuss what further support might be made available.

Royal Navy

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is in a position to announce any measures affecting Royal Navy establishments arising from his statement to the House on 25 July 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Detailed work on the future structure of the Royal Navy support area is continuing. At this stage in our considerations, however, it has already become clear that it will be possible to achieve significant savings through rationalisation of some functions. As a consequence of these measures, it is our intention to close, by 31 March 1992, the RN leadership school—HMS Royal Arthur—the RN Diesel repair depot, Blackbrock Farm, and, within the next 12 to 18 months, the accommodation and administrative headquarters at Furse house, London—HMS St. Vincent.

The leadership training functions presently carried out at HMS Royal Arthur will be transferred to an existing training centre at Whale island, Portsmouth—HMS Excellent. The resulting collocation of leadership training with management and divisional training will produce savings in terms of service and civilian manpower, as well as other running costs. The closure of HMS Vincent should produce worthwhile savings in similar areas, as well as receipts from the disposal of Furse house, assuming that no other defence use for the building is found. There will, however, be some costs in terms of lodging and subsistence allowances for those personnel currently accommodated in the establishment.

An independent review of the strategy for the repair and overhaul of RN marine diesel engines has concluded that there is no need to retain the in-house repair facility at Blackbrook Farm. Significant savings will be achieved through putting the whole repair task to industry, which already deals with some 70 per cent. of the work.

Consultations with the trade unions will take place, in accordance with normal department practice, and we hope to be able to offer alternative employment to the majority of the civilian staff affected by these closures.

Iraqi Trainees

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Iraqi military personnel underwent training in the United Kingdom in each of the years 1981 to 1990 inclusive.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* Details of military assistance provided to individual countries are normally confidential between Governments. In addition, statistics are normally collected on the number of places allocated to foreign students not on the number of individuals trained, who may attend more than one course. A total 430 places on MOD training courses were allocated to Iraqi students between 1981 and the cessation of training, following Mr. Bazoft's execution, in March 1990.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Attorney-General what is the expected time it takes for an appeal against refusal of *(a)* a visitor's visa and *(b)* an entry clearance to be heard; what were the comparable figures three, six and 12 months ago; and what plans he has to reduce this time.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department and the Immigration Appellate Authorities —IAA—do not keep detailed statistics on the expected times for appeals to be determined in the form requested, but it is possible to provide an informed estimate.

Over the past 12 months the average time taken for the IAA to deal with visit visa and settlement appeals to Adjudicators has been six to seven months. This does not include the time which appeals are in the hands of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Home Office and appellants' representatives. This can take from 2 months upwards depending on the nature and complexity of the case.

In addition, the average for appeals from a determination by an Adjudicator to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal over the same period has been 4-6 months, depending on the length of time taken by the parties to prepare their case.

The Lord Chancellor's Department is seeking to keep waiting times for hearings to a minimum and has authorised the IAA to increase the number of staff from 85 to 96½.

Social Security Appeals

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Attorney-General what are the most recent figures for the number of appeals received by the Social Security Commissioners concerning *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance.

The Attorney-General: The number of appeals received by the Social Security Commissioners in 1990, the last year for which figures are available, concerning *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance are 268 and 573 respectively.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Attorney-General what are the most recent figures for the number of decisions by social security commissioners regarding the award of either mobility or attendance allowance that found the decisions of *(a)* delegated medical practitioners and *(b)* medical appeal tribunals to be erroneous in law.

The Attorney-General: The number of decisions by Social Security Commissioners in 1990, the last year for which figures are available, regarding the award of Attendance Allowance that found the decisions of the Delegated Medical Practitioner to be erroneous in law is 535. Medical appeal tribunals become involved in attendance allowance appeals very infrequently. The number of decisions by Social Security Commissioners in the same period regarding the award of Mobility Allowance that found the decisions of medical appeals tribunals to be erroneous in law is 235.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Voluntary-aided Schools

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account is taken in determining the 1991-92 voluntary-aided capital programme of the academic results of a school; and how many voluntary-aided schools have a better academic record than Hasmonean high school, Barnet.

Mr. Fallon: Information on academic performance of individual voluntary-aided schools is not held in the Department and is not taken into account in determining the voluntary aided and special agreement capital programme.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of the 1991-92 voluntary-aided capital programme is being allocated to *(a)* Church of England schools, *(b)* Roman Catholic schools and *(c)* Jewish schools.

Mr. Fallon: The percentage of new major voluntary aided and special agreement building projects approved to start in 1991-92 has been allocated as follows:—*(a)* 41 per cent. for Church of England schools, *(b)* 41 per cent. for Roman Catholic schools and *(c)* 0 per cent. for Jewish schools. The remaining 18 per cent. was allocated for new projects in non-denominational voluntary aided and special agreement schools. Percentages are not available for expenditure on minor projects—£5,000 to £120,000 —since it is for local education authorities to determine how best to distribute their minor works allocations after consulting the associated bodies within their area.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when Barnet council first included the rebuilding of the Hasmonean high school in its voluntary-aided capital programme submission.

Mr. Fallon: Barnet local education authority first included the rebuilding of the Hasmonean high school in its plans for 1984-85.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what account is taken in determining the 1991-92 voluntary-aided capital programme of the extent to which schools are oversubscribed; and how many of the schools which received funding were more heavily oversubscribed than Hasmonean high school, Barnet.

Mr. Fallon: No account is taken of oversubscription in determining the 1991-92 voluntary-aided capital programme, except in the case of projects which result from statutory proposals to provide new school places in the absence of spare capacity in neighbouring schools. The information requested in the second part of the question is not available.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of Barnet schoolchildren are educated in voluntary-aided schools; what is the comparable percentage for other London education authorities; and what correlation there is between these percentages and the scale of new projects approved for the voluntary-aided sector 1991-92 capital programme.

Mr. Fallon: A total of 34 per cent. of Barnet school children were educated in voluntary aided schools as compared with 22 per cent. for Greater London. There is no significance in any correlation between these percentages and the scale of new projects approved for the voluntary-aided sector 1991-92 capital programme.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science in how many of the submissions for the 1991-92 voluntary-aided capital programme the sponsors offered to provide more than 15 per cent. of the cost.

Mr. Fallon: None.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science with whom were discussions held during the passage of the Hasmonean High School Bill and what was the then estimated cost of the proposals contained in the Bill.

Mr. Fallon: Discussions were held with officials of the Department acting on instructions from Ministers. The total estimated cost of rebuilding the boys' school on the girls' school site and enlarging it to six forms of entry was £5·96 million at April 1990 prices.

Teacher and Pupil Numbers

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science further to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North dated 17 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *26*, if he will show the number and change in the number of *(a)* teachers employed by local education authorities, in full-time equivalents and in percentage terms in each year, and *(b)* pupils in similar terms since 1970.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested for local education authority maintained and grant-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England is given in the table.

January	*Teachers (full-time equivalent thousands)*	*Percentage change from previous year*	*Pupils (full-time equivalent thousands)*	*Percentage change from previous year*
1971[1,2]	346·6	5·4	7,715·5	2·7
1972[2]	366·2	5·7	7,910·5	2·5
1973[2]	385·9	5·4	8,056·2	1·8
1974[2]	406·7	5·4	8,400·2	4·3
1975[2]	417·6	2·7	8,457·9	0·7
1976[2]	427·3	2·3	8,522·0	0·8
1977	433·3	1·4	8,533·4	0·1
1978	435·7	0·6	8,453·4	−0·9
1979	440·8	1·2	8,347·9	−1·3
1980	438·1	−0·6	8,183·0	−2·0
1981	429·2	−2·0	7,969·5	−2·6
1982	420·0	−2·1	7,752·0	−2·7
1983	414·6	−1·3	7,524·4	−2·9
1984	410·5	−1·0	7,345·0	−2·4
1985	405·3	−1·3	7,201·5	−2·0
1986	402·9	−0·6	7,073·7	−1·8
1987	402·3	−0·2	6,954·6	−1·7
1988	401·5	−0·2	6,832·3	−1·8
1989	397·4	−1·0	6,761·6	−1·0
1990	398·5	0·3	6,753·2	−0·1

[1] 1971 figures exclude teachers seconded for one year or more from nursery schools.
[2] Teacher figures from 1971-76 (inclusive) exclude student teachers and instructors in the nursery sector. Figures for 1975 and 1976 exclude student teachers and instructors in the primary and secondary sector.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is *(a)* the number of teachers employed by local education authorities and *(b)* the number of local education authority pupils in each year since 1979; and if he will show the percentage increase or decrease in each case.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested for local education authority maintained and grant-maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England is given in the table.

January	*Teachers (fte thousands)*	*percentage change from previous year*	*Pupils (fte thousands)*	*percentage change from previous year*
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1990	398·5	0·3	6,753·2	−0·1

Air-conditioning Systems

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state, or provide references to, the conditions made in school building regulations concerning the circulation and regular replacement of air in school classrooms, workshops and laboratories and any study made of the relations between these requirements and the incidence of cross-infection.

Mr. Fallon: Regulation 25 of the 1981 Education (School Premises) Regulations refers to the main recommendations for thermal environment set out in the current edition of the Department's design note 17:

"Guidelines for Environmental Design and Fuel Conservation". The design note itself includes recommendations on ventilation of schools. We are not aware of any studies made of the relations between the requirements for schools and the incidence of cross-infection.

Teachers, Norfolk

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average number of *(a)* holidays and *(b)* sickness leave taken by teachers employed by Norfolk education committee in each of the years 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1989.

Mr. Fallon: The data requested are not held centrally.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out in greater detail the statistical basis of his statement in his speech to the north of England education conference on 4 January, that only one country in the European Community exceeds the United Kingdom's present figure of 33 per cent. of the relevant age group achieving higher education qualifications, including his definition of qualification for these purposes.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The figures on which the statement are based are given in the table:

Higher education qualifications awarded

	Qualifications awarded per 100 of relevant age group[1]								*Total number of qualifications (1986*[5]*) (thousands)*
	1980[2]	*1986*[3]			*1986*[3]				
		All levels[4]			*Level 5*[4]	*Level 6*[4]	*Levels 5/6*[4]	*Level 7*[4]	
		Persons	*Men*	*Women*					
Australia[5]	26	27	27	28	9	16	26	2	74
Belgium[6]	[7]10	33	32	34	18	15	33	..	52
Canada	34	45	42	49	13	27	41	5	199
Denmark[6]	24	24	21	26	11	13	24	..	19
France	32	[8]36	[8]37	[8]36	[8]15	15	30	6	312
Germany (FRG)[6]	21	22	23	21	8	14	22	..	230
Italy	11	10	10	9	—	8	8	1	90
Japan[9] *(a)*	37	36	39	32	11	23	34	1	586
(b)[10]	49	47	48	45	22	23	46	1	770
Netherlands[6]	21	23	25	21	16	7	23	..	59
Spain	13	15	14	17	—	15	15	—	100
Sweden	37	33	30	36	20	12	32	1	40
United Kingdom[11]	23	33	34	31	13	15	28	5	315
USA[12] *(a)*	41	45	44	46	11	24	35	10	1,830
(b)[13]	31	34	34	33	24	9	33	1	1,374

[1] The relevant age group is considered to be the age group identified as including 70 per cent. of new entrants increased by the typical duration of course.
[2] 1982 data for France.
[3] 1985 data for Germany; 1987 Belgium, Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
[4] Level 7 = post-graduate; level 6 = first degree; level 5 = sub-degree higher education.
[5] Level detail based on 1985 data. 1986 data excludes TAFE.
[6] Level 6 includes level 7 data.
[7] Universities only.
[8] Increased by level 5 diplomas awarded on the completion of the first two years of a level 6 course.
[9] Including data for private colleges and correspondence courses.
[10] Includes advanced students in special training schools (senshus) some of whose courses may be equivalent to level 5.
[11] Includes estimated public sector professional qualifications and nursing and paramedical qualifications gained at DH establishments. Excludes private sector.
[12] Includes private colleges.
[13] Excludes students on two year courses (some of which may be below level 5), and, where appropriate, transfers bachelor's and master's degrees to levels 5 and 6 respectively.

Source: International Comparisons of Higher Education, unpublished DES report.

The qualifications included are all higher education qualifications—sub-degree, first degree and post-graduate—including nursing and paramedical qualifications and estimates of professional qualifications.

The calculation is based on OECD methodology for calculation of participation indices. The total number of qualifications awarded is divided by the average population of the age-group at which the qualifications are typically obtained. Further information is available in statistical bulletin 4/87, a copy of which is in the Library.

University Funding

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much he has made available for capital purposes for the universities in every year since 1979 expressed in 1990-91 prices.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Capital grants to universities in Great Britain paid since April 1989 by the Universities Funding Council and, before then, on the advice of the University Grants Committee were:

Financial year	Cash £ million	1990-91 prices[1] £ million
1979-80	87·8	190·1
1980-81	97·9	179·2
1981-82	103·1	172·1
1982-83	106·8	166·4
1983-84	103·1	153·6
1984-85	106·7	151·2
1985-86	118·2	158·9
1986-87	130·2	169·2
1987-88	128·8	158·8
1988-89	140·7	161·6
[2]1989-90	161·2	174·1
[2]1990-91	175·3	175·3

[1] 1990-91 prices are derived using the GDP deflator.
[2] Estimated, and includes provision for minor capital works which, in 1988-89 and before, formed an undifferentiated element of recurrent grant.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of his powers under section 156 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, how many applications from fire and civil defence authorities regarding expenditure on civil emergency co-ordination he has received; how much expenditure each application was in respect of; how much expenditure was agreed to by his Department in each case; and whether his Department has any plans to issue guidance concerning the application of section 156 of the Act.

Mr. John Patten: Section 156 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 enables a fire and civil defence authority, with the consent of the Secretary of State, to incur expenditure within the existing resources of principal councils in co-ordinating planning by principal councils with respect to emergencies or disasters. With the exception of an initial approach from the London fire and civil defence authority for the expenditure of £8,000 which has not yet been decided, no applications have been received. We have no plans at present to issue guidance about the application of this section of the Act.

Asylum

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the procedures for receiving asylum seekers and refugees in the light of experience following recent changes to these procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been no recent major changes in procedures and I am not clear to what changes the question refers. In view of the sharp increase in numbers of asylum applications in the United Kingdom, the Government are urgently reviewing arrangements for dealing with asylum seekers.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received concerning procedures for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers; what was his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We receive representations from time to time on many aspects of our procedures for receiving asylum seekers. Representations are made by hon. Members, interested organisations and the public. Many of the issues raised are being considered in the Government's current review of asylum arrangements.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each month from September 1989 to the nearest available date the number of asylum applications, by country *(a)* at ports of entry, *(b)* after entry and *(c)* at British ports overseas made in each case for (i) principal applicants and (ii) their dependants.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 December 1990]:* Information is not available in the form requested. The available information records dependants by the date and location of the application of the principal asylum applicant and also does not generally include dependants who join a principal applicant after the principal application has been decided.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in respect of dependants granted permission to join family members in the United Kingdom *(a)* who themselves had refugee status under the 1951 convention and *(b)* who had exceptional leave on the basis of family reunion, if he will give for 1989 and 1990 so far (i) the numbers of each nationality, (ii) how many cases and for which nationalities were required by the embassies abroad to pay visa charges and how much was paid in each case, (iii) for each nationality the numbers by reference to the familial relationship to the convention refugee in the United Kingdom and (iv) the delay between application and date of issue of visa in terms of three months, six months, nine months, and over one year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 12 December 1990]:* Information is not available in the form requested. The available information on asylum applicants records dependants by reference to the data on the principal applicant, and does not record the location of the dependants, or the date, whey they applied. It also does not generally include dependants who join a principal applicant after the principal application has been decided. Information on visa applications by dependants to join a person recognised as a refugee or granted exceptional leave in the United Kingdom is not available centrally. I understand that overseas posts have standing instructions that visas for dependants joining a person who has been recognised as a refugee under arrangements made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees or its partner the intergovernmental committee for migration —now the International Organisation for Migration— should be issued free of charge.

European Citizenship

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the concept of European citizenship following the agreement of the European Council that the matter should be examined; and which body will be undertaking the examination.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* The concept of European citizenship, separate from national

citizenship, needs considerable refinement and clarification before any decisions on its precise implications and acceptability could be made. Work on this is going ahead in the intergovernmental conference on political union.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether input tax will be recoverable by privatised electricity distribution companies on the costs arising from the sale of their own shares on a basis which differs from normal VAT practice; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Input tax incurred by a business in relation to the issues or sale of its own shares, an exempt supply, is not recoverable. However, shares in the electricity distribution companies were issued and sold on behalf of the Secretary of State for Energy, not the electricity distribution companies and the benefits of the sale accrued to the Government. Costs incurred by the electricity distribution companies in their privatisation were regarded as general overheads of their business—mainly the taxable supply of electricity—and any associated VAT was recoverable in accordance with the provisions of the VAT Act 1983.

Coinage

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his statement of 7 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *639*, he will list the organisations which were consulted in respect of the shape and size of the new five pence coin, indicating those who approved of its introduction; what further consultations he has in hand, or has completed, concerning the proposal to phase out the 10p and 50p coins, respectively; when replies to such consultations must be made; and when he expects to make any relevant decisions.

Mr. Maples: In July 1987 the Royal Mint issued a consultative pamphlet, "The United Kingdom Coinage". This set out four options for making the coinage lighter together with the option of "no change". The consultation was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the Trial of the Pyx on 1 May 1987 and in a Treasury press notice. It was widely reported in the press at the time. Comments were received from the general public and from a wide range of organisations representing:

1. The handicapped, the blind and the elderly.
2. Manufacturers and operators of coin-operated machinery.
3. Bulk handlers of cash such as banks, supermarkets and retail outlets.
4. Local Government, education and Chamber of Trade.

A substantial majority of those who commented favoured change and preferred the option in which the 5p was replaced by a coin similar to the old sixpence, and the 10p with one similar to the then existing 5p.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, having carefully considered all the responses to the consultation, announced on 17 December 1987 that he had decided to introduce the most popular option. The precise specifications of the new coins were decided later following consultations with the blind and with manufacturers of coin-operated machines. As a result of the discussions with representatives of the blind, it was agreed that the new coins should have a pronounced milled edge to make them more easily identified by touch.

Following discussions with the banks and the vending industry on timing, the new 5p coin was introduced into circulation on 27 June 1990. It has subsequently been decided, again after consulting the banks and the vending industry, that the new 10p coin will be introduced into circulation from September 1992 together with copper-plated 1p and 2p coins. The precise date has still to be announced but will be discussed with the banks and the vending industry. The old 5p coin was demonetised on 31 December 1990, but no decision has yet been taken on when to demonetise the existing 10p coin. The existing 1p and 2p coins will continue in circulation.

There are no plans at present for any further changes to the coinage.

Alcohol Duty

Mr. Wells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will set out in the *Official Report* the current rates of excise duty expressed in ecus in each of the EC member states for *(a)* table wine, *(b)* sherry at 16·5 per cent. alcohol, *(c)* port at 20 per cent. alcohol and *(d)* spirits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Rates of excise duties applied in each of the EC member states to table wines, fortified wine and spirits according to the latest information available, are set out in the table.

Country	*Excise duty on table wine (ecu per 75cl bottle)*	*Excise duty on sherry at 16·5 per cent alcohol (ecu per 75cl bottle)*	*Excise duty on port at 20 per cent. alcohol (ecu per 75cl bottle*	*Excise duty on spirits (ecu per bottle)*
Belgium	0·26	0·43	0·56	4·49
Denmark	1·19	2·21	2·21	13·87
France	0·02	1·34	1·34	3·35
Germany	0·00	0·97	0·97	3·72
Greece	0·00	0·01	0·01	0·09
Ireland	1·98	2·87	2·87	7·80
Italy	0·00	0·10	0·10	0·66
Luxembourg	0·08	0·27	0·40	2·68
Netherlands	0·27	0·44	0·57	4·11
Portugal	0·00	0·00	0·00	0·57
Spain	0·00	0·08	0·08	1·26
United Kingdom	1·16	1·93	2·23	7·33

Notes:

[1] Rates of exchange as at 10 January 1991.

[2] *Source:* EC Excise Duty tables. Inventory of Taxes.

[3] From the information available we can identify only four member states which apply different rates of duty to fortified wines of 16·5 per cent. and 20 per cent. alcohol. For the other member states the rates quoted are illustrative for products of 18 per cent. alcohol.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the balance of payments deficit or surplus for *(a)* manufacturers, *(b)* semi-manufacturers, *(c)* services, *(d)* consumer goods, *(e)* raw materials, *(f)* machinery and *(g)* invisibles for 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Mellor: The information, where available, can be found in the "Monthly Review of External Trade

Statistics", available in the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office database, which may also be accessed through the Library.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of payments surplus or deficit for invisibles for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: Information relating to the surplus or deficit for invisibles can be found in table 1.3 of the 1990 edition of the CSO's United Kingdom balance of payments publication—the Pink Book—and in table B of the CSO's quarterly balance of payments press notice. Copies of both are available in the Library of the House or alternatively the data can be found on the CSO database which can be accessed through the Library.

Public Sector Manpower

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his answer to the hon. Member for North Norfolk, dated 19 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *177*, on public sector manning, if he will state the number of people employed in the public sector in 1978-79 and 1988-89 *(a)* excluding nationalised industries and *(b)* excluding nationalised industries and armed forces, and also give the change in manpower in per cent. terms.

Mr. Mellor: The information is as follows:

	1978-79 thousands	*1988-89 thousands*	*Change thousands*	*Per cent.*
(a)	4,722	4,580	−142	−3·0
(b)	4,396	4,256	−140	−3·2

Source: The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93 (Cm. 1021): Chapter 21, Appendix D.

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the balance of payments surplus or deficit on manufactured goods for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The latest information is available in Table A9 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and its annual supplement, available in the Library of the House, or on the Central Statistical Office database, which may also be accessed through the Library.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual growth rate in the gross domestic product of the United Kingdom in *(a)* the 1960s, *(b)* the 1970s and *(c)* the 1980s.

Mr. Maples: Between 1980 and 1989 the average annual growth in gross domestic product of the United Kingdom averaged 2·7 per cent. per annum. This compares with growth rates of 3·0 per cent. in the 1960s and 1·8 per cent. in the 1970s.

Purchasing Initiative

Mr. Sayeed: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is being made in implementing the Government's purchasing initiative since 1988-89.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A report by the central unit on purchasing on progress in government purchasing during 1989-90 is published today. It records that central Government Departments, excluding the Ministry of Defence, reported value-for-money improvements in their purchasing totalling over £515 million equivalent to 6·7 per cent. of total reported expenditure. Since the start of the Government purchasing initiative in 1985, total value-for-money improvements have exceeded £1·3 billion.

Also, in 1989-90, Departments reported value-for-money improvements of £205 million arising from new initiatives taken in that year. This equates to 2·8 per cent. of purchasing expenditure of some £7,311 million.

For 1990-91, Departments will report only on savings arising from new initiatives in that year and collectively have set targets for value-for-money improvements of £118 million or 3·1 per cent. of purchasing expenditure. This target gives sharper emphasis to the current performance of departmental purchasing organisations.

The report also records progress on other areas of the purchasing initiative and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Share Offers (Priority Rights)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any proposals concerning the existing income tax exemption for directors and employees who derive a benefit from being given priority rights in a public offer of shares; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The existing provisions concerning priority share allocations remove the possibility of a tax charge on directors and employees arising solely because, where a public offer is oversubscribed, they get more shares than members of the public who apply for the same number. The exemption is available only in the context of a genuine public offer, of which the priority allocation to directors and employees forms a small part—10 per cent. or less—and where other conditions are met.

Most public offers comprise shares in just one company, and in these cases this rule causes no difficulty. But where a public offer consists of a package of shares in two or more companies, and directors and employees are entitled to priority allocations of shares in just one or only some of them, the exemption is not available. This is because the package offer to the public and the single company share offer or offers to employees cannot be treated under the existing provisions as a single public offer.

Since the Government do not believe that it would be right to charge tax in such circumstances we propose to extend the present tax exemption to cover them. We propose that the extension to the relief should apply to any public offer of shares made on or after today. Legislation to effect this will be included in the Finance Bill 1991.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Government Appointees

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all Government-appointed nominees to the board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive since its formation, giving the year of appointment and the length of service in each case.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Board

Name	*Year of appointment*	*Length of service at January 1991*	
		Years	*Months*
T. D. Lorimer	1971	4	9
J. O'Hara	1971	7	7
C. E. B. Brett	1971	12	10
H. R. Brown	1971	3	—
J. Donnelly	1971	3	—
F. G. Kinghan	1971	3	—
W. E. Elliott[1]	1971	2	6
G. M. Jones (Mrs.)[1]	1971	2	6
P. McArdle[1]	1971	2	6
Col. A. N. Clarke[1]	1973	5	—
A. W. McGowan[1]	1973	2	—
W. H. R. Nicholl[1]	1973	8	—
A. Bashford (Mrs.)	1974	2	—
J. J. Donnelly	1974	2	—
P. McKenna	1974	2	—
T. Seymour[1]	1975	3	10
R. E. Myles Humphreys	1976	3	—
P. J. Heron	1976	2	10
M. Robinson (Mrs.)	1976	5	7
C. Linehan (Mrs.)	1976	—	2
G. Johnson	1977	6	9
Rev. R. T. W. McCrea[1]	1978	—	11
J. W. Cushnahan	1978	3	9
E. K. McGrady	1978	3	9
J. R. Gorman	1979	6	3
D. G. R. Green[1]	1979	3	—
	1985	1	—
W. G. Bleakes[1]	1979	2	—
M. Mitchell (Mrs.)	1980	9	3
W. J. Beattie[1]	1981	1	—
J. Carson CBE[1]	1981	—	9
H. McKeag[1]	1981	1	—
J. McEvoy	1982	8	[2]2
D. McGuinness	1982	7	—
A. P. McConaghy[1]	1982	2	—
W. C. Noble[1]	1982	3	—
A. Spence[1]	1982	1	—
	1984	[2]6	—
N. G. D. Ferguson	1983	6	—
E. Turner[1]	1983	2	—
	1991	[2]—	—
P. J. Devlin	1984	2	11
K. E. Dunlop (Miss)	1984	3	7
J. Doherty	1985	3	4
J. Smith[1]	1985	5	3
J. Speers[1]	1986	4	[2]3
S. McDowell	1987	3	[2]10
J. Wilde (Dr.)	1987	3	—
W. Carson	1988	2	[2]2
B. Shiels	1989	1	[2]2
F. Cook (Mrs)	1989	1	[2]2
E. Waterson (Mrs.)	1989	1	[2]2
A. O'Donoghue (Mrs.)	1990	—	[2]2

[1] Nominated by the Northern Ireland Housing Council.
[2] Ongoing.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all Government-appointed nominees to the Police Authority for Northern Ireland since its formation, giving the year of appointment and the length of service in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney: For security reasons it is not our policy to disclose the names of members of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland.

Local Government Boundaries Commissioner

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is in a position to announce the name of the person who is to be the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I am pleased to announce that Dr. Maurice Hayes has been appointed as Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland. He will commence his task on 1 February 1991.

Parliamentary Commissioner and Complaints Commissioner

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he will make a statement about the offices of Northern Ireland Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints.

Mr. Brooke: Dr. Maurice Hayes, who has held the two offices since July 1987, will be retiring from them on 31 January 1991 and thereafter will be taking up appointment as the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

Her Majesty the Queen has appointed, to succeed him in the two offices, Mrs. Jill McIvor. Mrs. McIvor is already deputy chairman of the Radio Authority and will retain that office, but will forgo a part of the salary normally payable for the offices of Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and Commissioner for Complaints equivalent to the salary she receives as deputy chairman.

EC Support

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been allocated by the EC for each of the operational programmes under the Community support framework for Northern Ireland 1989-93.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* The Community support framework for Northern Ireland was approved on 31 October 1989 and provides for nine operational programmes, all of which have now been agreed by the European Commission. Community funding is allocated to the operational programmes as follows:

	MECU	*£ million*
Physical and social environment	34·0	23·97
Transportation	137·0	96·58
Industrial development	116·46	82·10
Agricultural development	53·6	37·78
Tourism	44·223	31·17
Multipriority	25·194	17·76
Apprenticeship training	4·693	3·30
Combating long-term unemployment	32·64	23·01
Occupation and integration of young people	174·32	122·89

Figures are shown in 1989 prices and based on the December 1990 exchange rate of £1 = 0·705 ecu.

The resources allocated in the Community support framework also include provision for various programmes, for example, STAR, Valoren, non-quota border areas, non-quota textiles and so on, which were in operation before the Community support framework was agreed.

Disability

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what requirements are laid on employers in Northern Ireland to ensure that a proportion of their work force is registered disabled.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (Northern Ireland) 1945 requires employers with 20 or more employees to employ a 3 per cent. quota of registered disabled people.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Less-favoured Area Status

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his written answer to the hon. Member for Taunton on 19 December, he will list in the *Official Report* the parishes in Somerset and Devon in respect of which he applied to the European Commission for an extension of less-favoured area status and which was not agreed to by the Commission.

Mr. Curry: The Parishes in Somerset and Devon which include some land which was covered by the application to the European Commission for an extension of the United Kingdom less-favoured area but which was not accepted by the European Commission were:

Somerset: Churchstanton, Otterford, Pitminster, Spaxton.
Devon: Bishops Bympton, Chulmleigh, Kings Nympton, Knowstone, Meshaw, Molland, Oakford, Okehampton Hamlets, Rackenford, including former Creacombe, Rose Ash, Thornbury, Twitchen, Witheridge.

HEALTH

Day Surgery Facilities

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he plans to monitor the proportion of new day surgery facilities at King's College hospital used by *(a)* private and *(b)* national health service patients.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Camberwell health authority has given assurances that this unit is designated wholly for NHS patients.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice he gives about the appointment of members of district health authorities; and whether he includes specific advice concerning the desirability of members residing in the area covered by the health authority to which they are appointed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for each regional health authority to decide on the appointment of members to district health authorities within its area. Guidance issued to health authorities in July 1990 specifies that it is preferable for members to live or work in, or have connections with, the community served.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has about the number of health authority members who live in the health authority area for each authority in the North Western health region.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available centrally. Responsibility for appointing non-executive members of district health authorities rests with regional health authorities. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Bruce Martin, the chairman of the North Western regional health authority, for details.

Census White Paper

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to publish the independent confidentiality review mentioned in paragraph 29 of the census White Paper, Cm 430; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The report of the British Computer Society's independent review on the confidentiality arrangements for the computer processing of 1991 census data will be published, together with the Government's response, in a White Paper before the census, which is on 21 April this year.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether regional health authority cash limits for 1991-92 have been issued.

Mr. Waldegrave: Allocations and initial cash limits were issued just before Christmas. However, the 1990-91 baseline on which these were based had not been properly adjusted to take account of expenditure on long-stay patients, and this affected regions' positions from their weighted capitation target. The new figures for allocations, set out as follows, were notified to regions early in the new year and revised cash limits will follow. This revision does not affect the overall money available or the principle upon which it has been distributed between regions.

1991-92 Revenue allocations to RHAs (England)

Region	*1991-92 Allocations for resident population £ million*	*Percentage cash increase for resident population*
Northern	985·3	10·0
Yorkshire	1,121·0	10·5
Trent	1,406·5	10·5
East Anglian	595·7	11·8
North West Thames	1,097·2	10·0
North East Thames	1,295·5	10·0
South East Thames	1,221·2	10·0
South West Thames	946·8	10·0
Wessex	872·1	12·1
Oxford	675·4	10·0
South Western	1,000·0	11·8
West Midlands	1·566·8	10·0
Mersey	775·2	10·0
North Western	1,295·0	10·0

Regional cash limits will include additional amounts for specific purposes.

WALES

Pwllpeiran Husbandry Farm

Mr. Geraint Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to safeguard the future of Pwllpeiran experimental husbandry farm in Cardiganshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Options to safeguard the research facilities available at Pwllpeiran are being explored at present.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount he estimates each district health authority and special health authority in Wales should be

able to achieve in 1990-91 and 1991-92 in respect of *(a)* efficiency savings, *(b)* cuts in services and *(c)* income generation and list the factors he has taken into account in estimating a figure that reflects local circumstances in each district health authority.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The 1990-91 cash-releasing cost improvement and income generation targets set for district health authorities in Wales and the Welsh Health Common Services Authority are shown in the table. In 1991-92, these authorities collectively will be expected to realise £11 million from cost improvement and income generation. The targets to be achieved by individual health authorities will depend on their recurring revenue allocations. These are currently being determined and should be announced shortly.

Individual targets are the subject of bilateral discussions with health authorities. They are expected to be achieved by genuine efficiency savings and additional income generated, and not by making cuts in services. The Welsh Office has issued clear guidance to health authorities that cost improvement measures should not result in a reduction in the quantity or standard of service provided. Authorities' costs improvement programmes are closely monitored to ensure that they do have an adverse effect on the pattern or provision of services.

The Health Promotion Authority for Wales has a target figure of £67,000 in 1990-91 for the generation of additional net income. A target for 1991-92 has not yet been set. Targets for cost improvement are not set for the authority.

Cash-releasing cost improvement and income generation targets for district health authorities in Wales and the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, 1990-91

Health authority	*Cash improvement target (£000s)*	*Income generation target (£000s)*
Clwyd	1,282	231
East Dyfed	824	149
Gwent	1,518	274
Gwynedd	761	137
Mid Glamorgan	1,776	321
Pembrokeshire	312	57
Powys	367	66
South Glamorgan	2,079	372
West Glamorgan	1,312	237
Welsh Health Common Services Authority	94	17

Powys Health Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the amount spent by Powys health authority on its board room; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Powys health authority advises that the cost of replacement furniture for the board room amounted to £4,755.

National Curriculum

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans to meet *(a)* local education authorities of Wales, *(b)* the teachers' unions and *(c)* the parent-teacher associations of Wales to discuss the national curriculum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have already had extensive consultations with these bodies. We have no plans at present to meet them, but intend to make a statement shortly on the national curriculum in Wales for pupils aged 14 to 16.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans to call an all-Wales conference of those concerned with education to discuss the national curriculum.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have no such plans at present but intend to make a statement shortly on the curriculum for pupils aged 14 to 16.

Connah's Quay Power Station

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take special measures to assist Alyn and Deeside council to develop the site of Connah's Quay power station.

Mr. David Hunt: Development of the site at Connah's Quay is a commercial matter for its owners, PowerGen plc. However, I understand that PowerGen has no plans to sell the site at present and that Connah's Quay is one of a number of sites under consideration for future power generation purposes.

Cancer Treatment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the availability of cancer treatment for patients in north Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Radiotherapy treatment is provided to patients in north Wales at specialist centres in neighbouring English regions and central funds have provided fast comfortable ambulance transport for Gwynedd patients having to travel for treatment. Central funds have also been made available to provide medical oncology services at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Maelor Wrexham to reduce the need for patients to travel for treatment. A report on cancer treatment services in north Wales commissioned from Deloitte, Haskins and Sells is being considered following wide consultation. An announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Family Farms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many full-time family farms there are in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of holdings in Wales estimated to have the economic potential to provide the equivalent of a full-time occupation was 16,613 in June 1989.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many full-time family farmers left the industry in Wales in 1989 and 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: The total number of whole-time principal farmers or partners in June 1988 was 19,460 and 19,392 in June 1989. Figures for 1990 are not yet available.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has taken to assist full-time family farmers in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Welsh farmers receive assistance as appropriate from a range of measures including the sheep annual premium, beef special premium, suckler cow premium and hill livestock compensatory allowances. Expenditure on grants and subsidies to Welsh farmers total over £100 million a year. In addition, the beef market has also been supported by the special arrangements for intervention which has thus far cost about £230 million on a United Kingdom basis and Welsh sheep producers have also benefited from the bringing forward of the two advance payments of sheep annual premium worth £25 million.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to assist full-time family farming in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I recognise the importance of family farms within the structure of agriculture in Wales and their significance in social terms. I will continue to seek to ensure that these farms, along with others, are able to compete effectively and on equal terms within the single European market.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales in which locations in the world the Welsh Development Agency has direct, on-the-spot representation by *(a)* an employee and *(b)* an agent; and how these arrangements have changed in the past 10 years.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Development Agency and its inward investment division, Welsh Development International, have permanent representation at a number of locations overseas. In north America the main office is in Baltimore with part-time representatives in California and Ottawa. In the far east the main office is in Tokyo with another representative in South Korea. In Europe, in addition to the headquarters in Cardiff, there is an office in Stuttgart, a representative in London and consultants are employed in Brussels. Of the above offices employees of the Welsh Development Agency are located in north America, Stuttgart and London. Within Wales the agency has six regional offices staffed by its own employees.

The Welsh Development Agency has had overseas offices since 1983 and the arrangements are kept under continuous review. Changes during the period have included: the opening of the Stuttgart office in 1990 in succession to the employment of agents; the closure of a representative office in Stockholm in 1988; the appointment of consultants in Hong Kong in 1989, an arrangement which ended in 1990; and the rearrangement of north American representation in 1989.

Health Service (Land Sales)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the future ownership of land and buildings belonging to the hospital service in Wales and the principles for buying and selling surplus property and the application of the proceeds;

(2) what policy considerations have led him to review the arrangements for overseeing the buying and selling of surplus land and buildings forming part of the national health service estate in Wales;

(3) whether he has any proposals to set up a new non-departmental government body to oversee the buying and selling of surplus land and buildings owned by the national health service in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *[holding answer 15 January 1990]:* I refer the hon. Gentleman to the letter sent to him on 16 January 1991 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. A copy of it is being placed in the Library of the House.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Higher Education

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to present to the House draft regulations to implement the European Community directive of 21 December 1988 on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years' duration (89/48/EEC).

Mr. Sainsbury: I expect to lay regulations implementing directive 89/48/EEC shortly.

Accountancy Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions his Department has held with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales over its application for a supervisory body status.

Mr. Redwood: There have been a number of discussions between the Department and the institute on this matter, and I expect further discussions to be held.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Iraq

15. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's and European Community policy over the maintenance of indefinite sanctions against Iraq until Iraq abandons its chemical, binary and nuclear programmes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The sanctions imposed on Iraq by Security Council resolution 661 will remain in place until the Security Council is ready to lift them. A judgment on whether Iraq continues to harbour aggressive designs on its neighbours in the region will no doubt be one of the factors in the Council's decision.

24. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest assessment of the effectiveness of sanctions against Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Sanctions were imposed on Iraq to help bring about Iraqi compliance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions. The test of their effectiveness is whether they achieve that purpose. There is no evidence that sanctions alone will do so.

Brazil

17. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when it is anticipated the next meeting will take place between the Brazilian Government and Her Majesty's Government on environmental issues.

Mrs. Chalker: Frequent meetings and discussions are taking place at official level. The next meeting at ministerial level is expected to be in late April.

Lebanon (British Hostages)

18. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect renewed diplomatic relations with Syria will have on prospects for the release of British hostages held in the Lebanon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Syria is an important regional power with a strong influence in Lebanon. On the resumption of diplomatic relations the Syrians undertook to continue their strenuous efforts to obtain the release of western, including British, hostages in Lebanon. This must contribute towards the prospects for a release. Our own efforts will of course remain unremitting.

Intergovernmental Conference

19. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress within the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Hurd: The two intergovernmental conferences began in Rome on 15 December last year. The initial sessions dealt mainly with procedural matters. We have British proposals to make in both negotiations.

European Legislation

20. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the implementation of EC legislation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Commission's lastest report on single market implementation shows that the United Kingdom has implemented 84 per cent. of measures requiring national implementation. Only Denmark 88 per cent. and Portugal, with its derogations—85 per cent.—had a better record.

Argentina

21. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with Argentina.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There has been good progress since the resumption of diplomatic relations with Argentina last February. Trade is growing rapidly. Several ministerial meetings have led to agreements on visa abolition; fisheries conservation; cultural co-operation; and investment promotion and protection. We aim to build on this encouraging trend.

Cyprus

22. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions, as a guarantor power, he has had with the Greek Cypriot Government about recent developments in southern Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We maintain regular high-level contacts with all parties involved in the intercommunal dispute, and actively support the United Nations Secretary-General's efforts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement.

38. **Mr. Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will convene a conference of the guarantor powers to discuss the resolution of the Cyprus dispute.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We believe that the United Nations Secretary-General's mission of good offices offers the best hope of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the intercommunal dispute in Cyprus. As part of our active support of United Nations efforts, we maintain continuous diplomatic contact with all parties to the dispute, including the fellow guarantor powers.

Romania (Adoption)

23. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance is currently being provided by the British embassy in Bucharest to couples wishing to adopt Romanian orphans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Entry clearance applications on behalf of Romanian children whom British couples wish to adopt are made at the British embassy in Bucharest and forwarded to the Home Office in the United Kingdom. The embassy will continue to help British adopters to complete United Kingdom entry clearance procedures as quickly as possible.

"Get It Right Before You Go"

25. **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the consular leaflet "Get It Right Before You Go".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has received appreciative comments on its general travel advice leaflets, "Get It Right Before You Go".

The original leaflet, "Consular Assistance Abroad", explains what a consul can and cannot do for Britons in trouble abroad and is distributed mainly through travel agents. The new leaflet "A Checklist for Travellers" is distributed with British visitor's passports through post offices and concentrates on a few key messages including encouraging travellers to take out adequate insurance and to safeguard valuables.

Middle East Conference

26. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any discussions with the United States Government about convening a middle east conference on the Palestinian question; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in close touch with the Americans about ways to advance the peace process. We welcome their agreement to a statement by the President of the Security Council on 20 December that an international conference, at an appropriate time, properly structured, should facilitate efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement and a lasting peace in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

27. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the outcome of his last meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel concerning the setting up of a middle east peace conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend last met Mr. Shamir in October. Their discussions confirmed continuing differences of approach on Arab-Israel, including over the merits of an international conference. We have long supported this idea. That support continues. But a conference is a technique, not an end in itself. It needs willing participants if it is to get anywhere. We take every opportunity to point out to the Israelis the need for flexibility if the peace process is to be advanced.

Zimbabwe

28. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations were made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Zimbabwe during 1990 about the abuse of human rights in Zimbabwe.

Mrs. Chalker: None. Zimbabwe's human rights performance has significantly improved in recent years.

The Gulf

29. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any fresh proposals for resolving the Gulf crisis; and if he will make a statement.

30. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments in the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August, we and many others have made sincere efforts to bring the Gulf crisis to a peaceful solution on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions. Those efforts have been redoubled in the last days, notably by Secretary Baker's meeting with Tariq Aziz on 9 January and by the United Nations Secretary-General's visit to Baghdad on 13 January. Iraq has utterly failed to respond positively to any of these initiatives. We continue to urge Iraq to choose the path of peace. But the 15 January deadline was a real one. If Iraq does not withdraw from Kuwait it will be forced to do so.

Mr. Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on President Menem's decision to send Argentine warships to join the multi-national forces in the Gulf.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We welcome and support President Menem's decision to make a contribution. Accordingly and exceptionally, we are allowing a limited supply of essential maintenance spares for an Argentine Meko class destroyer and frigate now deployed as part of the Argentine contribution to the Gulf. This is an exception to, but not a change of, policy on the supply of military-related equipment to Argentina.

The Commonwealth

31. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will next meet the Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat to discuss the Commonwealth.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no immediate plans to do so, but my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, expects to see the Secretary General on 22 January.

Syria

32. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and Syria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom resumed diplomatic relations with Syria on 28 November. It is to our advantage to have normalised our relations with such an important regional power at this time of crisis in the middle east.

Latin America

33. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives he has proposed to help improve relations with Latin America.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We do all we can to strengthen our excellent relations with Latin America, promote trade and investment, protect the environment and combat drugs-trafficking. We and our EC partners have established dialogues with Rio group and Central American Ministers, and aim to increase our development aid to the region.

Soviet Union

34. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had concerning the provision of expertise and technical and other support to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We agreed with our European partners at the Rome European Council in December to offer technical assistance worth up to 400 million ecu—about £285 million—to the Soviet Union. This decision is being reviewed in the light of recent developments in the Baltic states. EC Foreign Ministers made it clear on 14 January that our co-operation with the Soviet Union could not be implemented if repression continued in the Baltic states.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he plans any urgent aid by way of pharmaceutical products and medicines for the Soviet Union.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom is participating in the EC programme of humanitarian assistance to the Soviet Union agreed at the European Council in December 1990. This aid will include food and medical supplies to the value of 3 million ecu. A total of 250 tonnes of medical supplies have already been despatched by the European Community.

The United Kingdom has not received any specific requests for medical aid from the USSR.

Foreign Affairs Council

35. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Community Foreign Affairs Council is next due to meet; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The next meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council will be on 4 and 5 February. Discussion is likely to include GATT, EC relations with EFTA, Turkey and with the United States, ACP debt and Japanese car imports.

British Exports

36. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how high a priority Foreign Office posts overseas are placing on the promotion of British exports; and how such efforts are measured.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In 1990, a total of 29 per cent. of overseas staff resources were devoted to commercial work. This makes it the FCO's major activity overseas. The effectiveness of our commercial sections is measured in a number of ways, including an independent quality management system.

Somalia

37. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest assessment of the situation in Somalia and the position of Somali refugees in Ethiopia; and whether he will press for further international efforts to achieve peace.

Mrs. Chalker: There has been a serious outbreak of fighting in Mogadishu between Government and rebel forces and the situation remains confused. British embassy staff and the British community were evacuated on 6 January for their own safety. Somali refugees in Ethiopia are in the care of UNHCR and in no immediate danger. We are continuing to work with other countries on efforts to bring reconciliation and peace to Somalia.

Guatemala

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Guatemala about human rights abuse in general and, specifically, about the massacre of civilians in Santiago, Atitlan Solola province on 2 December; if he will raise this matter with the Guatemalan authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's ambassador has reported fully, including the shootings at Santiago Atitlan. He and his EC colleagues raised them with the Guatemalan Government on 4 December. On 14 January, the Twelve made a statement congratulating President Serrano on his election, and expressing their hope that human rights would be fully respected.

Varosha

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with Mr. Rauf Denktash on the future of Varosha.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has had no discussions with Mr. Denktash. Varosha will be a key element in any settlement of the intercommunal dispute in Cyprus. All parties to the dispute are well aware of our strong view that there should be no change in the status of Varosha, nor any settlement of the area in contravention of UN Security Council resolution 550 of 11 May 1984.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

EC Legislation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Lord President of the Council what percentage of legislation enacted in the past year originated in the EC Commission.

Mr. MacGregor: For national legislation, records are not kept centrally of which new provisions give effect to Community obligations and the relevant information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost. European Community legislation, some of which is directly applicable in the United Kingdom, is published in the Official Journal of the European Communities, L series.

Aluminium Cans

Mr. Butler: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will consider the possibility of arranging for the siting of recycling bins for aluminium cans within the House of Commons.

Mr. MacGregor: I understand that the authorities of both Houses are considering the practicability of siting bins for the collection of cans for recycling.

Canned Drinks

Mr. Butler: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the volume of canned drinks sold in the House of Commons in the latest available year.

Mr. MacGregor: The number of canned drinks sold in the House for the latest 12-month period, to December 1990, was 90,980.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of outstanding industrial tribunal cases at the end of November.

Mr. Forth: I regret that the information requested is not available for the end of November. However, on 3

January, excluding cases which require further interlocutory action before listing for hearing, there were 13,483 registered applications awaiting hearing. Of these, 4,716 have been listed for hearing. However, some two-thirds of all registered applications do not come to a hearing because they are withdrawn or settled prior to a hearing.

European Social Fund

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his target date for the payment of European social fund grant to voluntary organisations for the 1991 programme.

Mr. Forth: It is my Department's intention that applications will be approved and initial payments made in the first half of 1991. This timetable is of course subject to the views of the partners in the European social fund who are currently considering how much time they need to deal with their part of the process.

At a meeting on 8 January the Commission and the Government proposed a target date of 15 April but the partners indicated that early May might be preferable to them. Even this date depends on the Commission releasing moneys for 1991 to Britain in good time.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what detailed steps he is taking to improve staffing and procedures for dealing with 1991 applications for European social fund applications.

Mr. Forth: A number of improvements are being made by my Department. We have increased our staffing substantially. The application forms have been simplified. Speedier checks on claims for payment will be introduced. As requested by the European social fund partners, early indications have been given of the overall sums of money likely to be available to the various groups of applicants. The assistance of the European Commission has been sought, particularly in speeding up the approval in Brussels of United Kingdom claims for payment.

At a meeting on 8 January the Commission and the Government proposed a target date of 15 April, but the partners indicated that early May might be preferable to them. Even this date depends on the Commission releasing moneys for 1991 to Britain in good time.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to issue the application form for voluntary organisations for the 1991 European social fund programme.

Mr. Forth: The application forms for 1991 are expected to be dispatched on Friday 18 January to the representatives of the main organisations involved in the European Social Fund.

At a meeting on 8 January the Commission and the Government proposed a target date of 15 April, but the partners indicated that early May might be preferable to them. Even this date depends on the Commission releasing moneys for 1991 to Britain in good time.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the percentage regional chages in employment and self-employment for 1970 to 1979 and 1980 to 1989 for each of the standard regions of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jackson: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Offices

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the level of funding of community care loans and grants at his Department's office in Great Ancoats, Manchester; what has been his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have received representations from the director of public health for Manchester health authority about the level of the social fund budget at the Department's Manchester Central local office. This is currently under consideration.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what change there has been in the numbers and time involved in waiting for a claim to be dealt with following the introduction of the computer system at Chorlton.

Miss Widdecombe: Before introduction of the computer system to Chorlton, five days were ascribed for dealing with income support claims. This target is unchanged.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what efforts he makes to ensure consistency between the granting of loans and grants by his Department's different offices.

Mr. Scott: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State issues directions and guidance to social fund officers; however, we believe that flexibility and the exercise of discretion are important features of the social fund.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the level of funding of his Department's Great Ancoats office in the light of changing demand.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department monitors workloads on a monthly basis and conducts an annual review of resource allocations. Allocations to offices each year take account of forecast workloads, and the in year monitoring examines the distribution of staff resources at local level.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the frequency and nature of errors on the computer system used to calculate benefit at his Department's Chorlton, Manchester office.

Miss Widdecombe: There have been a number of system faults reported since the computer system was installed on 29 May 1989 at DSS Chorlton. They have been corrected as they arose.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many items of post are outstanding presently at Chorlton.

Miss Widdecombe: At 14 December 1990, the latest available date, the number of unlinked items of post was 47.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the structure and staffing levels at his Department's Chorlton office.

Miss Widdecombe: In April 1991, the Chorlton, Rusholme and Wythenshawe offices will come together to form the South Manchester district service and will be managed as a single unit, but no offices will be closed to the public. District managers will be responsible for drawing up detailed plans to provide the best possible service to local customers in the most effective way. These will be prepared in consultation with interested parties, including constituency MPs.

Allowances (Appeals)

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current success rates for *(a)* initial claims, *(b)* initial reviews, *(c)* later reviews, *(d)* appeals to the social security commissioners and *(e)* appeals to social security appeal tribunals for attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available but such information as is available is as follows:

(a) In 1988 there were 362,000 initial claims for attendance allowance. In the same period, there were 208,000 awards.

(b) and *(c)* I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 3 December 1990 at columns *6-8*.

(d) In 1989, 457 appeals were lodged with social security appeal tribunals. In that period, 67 appeals were decided in the claimant's favour.

(e) The Lord Chancellor's Department has advised that information is not available from the office of the social security commissioners on the success rate of attendance allowance appeals.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the success rates for *(a)* initial claims, *(b)* appeals to medical boards, *(c)* appeals to medical appeal tribunals and *(d)* appeals to the social security commissioners for mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: The available information is in the table:

Numbers received in 1990

	Number	*Number of successful determinations in 1990*[1]
Initial claims	201,500	97,500
Appeals to medical boards	27,500	8,000
Appeals to medical appeal tribunals	8,500	3,000
Appeals to the social security commissioners	[2]n.a.	[2]n.a.

n.a. Not available.

[1] Determinations are not necessarily made in the same period.

[2] The Lord Chancellor's Department, who are responsible for the office of the social security commissioners (OSSC), have advised that information is not available on the success rate of mobility allowance appeals.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of those potentially eligible for the disability working allowance have partners in paid employment.

Mr. Scott: We estimate that a small number of people, probably less than 5,000, of those eligible for disability working allowance have partners in paid employment.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the *(a)* threshold levels, *(b)* taper percentage and *(c)* maximum benefit levels for the proposed disability working allowance.

Mr. Scott: Illustrative rates for disability working allowance—DWA—are contained in the note on DWA published on 12 November, a copy of which was placed in the Library. The level at which the benefit will be introduced in April 1992 will be settled nearer the time, subject to the passage of the Disability Living Allowance and Disability Working Allowance Bill.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances the disability working allowance may be awarded for a period either more than or less than 26 weeks; whether any circumstances relating to the claimant's own personal circumstances entitle a claimant to have the amount of his award reviewed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Normally awards of disability working allowance will be made for 26 weeks, but if large numbers of claims are received in advance of the start of the scheme it might, for operational reasons, be necessary to stagger awards to even out renewal claims. Awards will be reviewed, and terminated, only in prescribed circumstances: that is, if a single claimant or both members of a couple die or if a child of the claimant's family leaves and joins another family and income support, family credit or another award of disability working allowance becomes payable in respect of him or her.

Family Credit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown of current family credit recipients by *(a)* employees, *(b)* self-employed, *(c)* mortgage owners and *(d)* tenants, further broken down by sex.

Mr. Jack: At the end of May 1990, the latest date for which figures are available, the information is as follows:

	Number
(a) *Employees*	
Male	139,000
Female	129,000
Total	268,000
(b) *Self-employed*	
Male	38,000
Female	9,000
Total	47,000

No information is available about the number of family credit claimants who are mortgage payers or tenants.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations have been received by his Department concerning the problems faced by the self-employed who wish to claim family credits; and what action has been taken by his Department to deal with the problems.

Mr. Jack: Most of the representations have related to business income for family credit purposes being determined on a different basis from that used for income

tax purposes. Some have also been made about the length of time taken to deal with claims from the self-employed. We have been monitoring the position since the introduction of family credit in 1988 and have introduced a number of changes to help the self-employed, the principal one was to amend the legislation relating to the acceptability of business accounts as evidence.

We are commissioning in-depth research into the self-employed in family credit, which will pay particular attention to the way in which the amount of business income is determined.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time for processing family credit claims from the day the claim is received to the first day of payment of an award in the case of *(a)* employees and *(b)* self-employed.

Mr. Jack: Information is available only for the average time from receipt of the claim to when the decision is made. On this basis, the latest information, for the 12 months ended December 1990, about average clearance times is as follows:

	working days
All claims	20·45
Employees	18·73
Self-employed	30·19

Order books are usually issued on the working day following the decision and should be received by payees on the next day.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the average wages of current recipients of family credit; and what is the average duration of family credit awards.

Mr. Jack: For the end of May 1990, the latest date for which information is available, the average gross weekly earnings in cases in which the main earner was an employee was £108·36. The corresponding figure for all cases, including the self-employed, was £102·12.

Family credit is awarded for a fixed duration of 26 weeks. At the end of the award period a fresh claim has to be made and, if benefit is awarded, it will again last for 26 weeks.

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims were received by his Department for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* mobility allowance in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Scott: The information is in the table.

	[1] *Attendance allowance*	[2] *Mobility allowance*
1988	362,000	240,000
1989	365,000	242,000
1990	[3]—	240,000

[1] Initial claims only.
[2] Includes renewal and subsequent claims.
[3] Not yet available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures for the numbers of attendance allowance reviews resulting in an increased award from the lower to the higher rate.

Mr. Scott: Information is not available in the form requested. However, the total number of awards of attendance allowance, including renewal claims, where the award changed from the lower to the higher rate for the 12-month period ending 30 September 1990 was 31,000.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current success rate on renewal claims for *(a)* attendance allowance and *(b)* mobility allowance.

Mr. Scott: There were 42,000 renewal claims of mobility allowance in 1990. During the same period there were 33,000 awards on such claims. Information for attendance allowance is not available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action will be taken by the Department subsequent to the recent commissioner's decision CA/380/1990 relating to attendance allowance in respect of children to *(a)* alert those people whose claims were refused, *(b)* contact others who would have been entitled but were deterred from making a claim by the age bar and *(c)* pay benefit to those who were entitled but are now outside the time limit for claiming.

Mr. Scott: We are considering all the implications of this decision.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide details on the training and follow-on training received by examining doctors and adjudicating medical practitioners on the new deaf-blind rules in mobility allowance; and what monitoring has been carried out by his Department to ensure that examining doctors and adjudicating medical authorities are following departmental guidance when dealing with claims for mobility allowance under the deaf-blind rules.

Mr. Scott: Following the introduction of the new deaf-blind rules in mobility allowance, notes for examining doctors were issued in the form of an insert added to each examination report, both for examining doctors and adjudicating medical authorities. This insert gives guidance on the way the new rules should be applied.

Adjudication officers monitor the doctors' reports, and bring to the attention of the Department's senior medical officer any problems which arise. If it is apparent that any doctor requires further training, it is given. Reports by adjudicating medical authorities are examined by the Department's full-time medical staff and, again, any problems are brought to the attention of the senior medical officer.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, according to the most recent figures available, how many attendance allowance claimants had their award withdrawn or interrupted in 1989 and 1990 on the grounds of living in scheduled accommodation.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many attendance claims in respect of children under two years of age were received by the Department *(a)* from April 1990 to December 1990 and *(b)* from March 1970 to March 1990.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available, but 6,100 claims in respect of children under two years were processed in the period April 1990 to December 1990.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what are the numbers of invalid care allowance recipients who are *(a)* entitled and *(b)* potentially entitled to income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit;

(2) how many invalid care allowance claims have been disqualified on account of the overlapping benefits regulations; and how many of these claims were received *(a)* prior to 1 October 1990 and *(b)* after 1 October 1990;

(3) how many invalid care allowance claimants would be entitled to the carer's premium were it not for the overlapping benefits regulations.

Miss Widdecombe: At the time of the May 1989 annual statistical inquiry, some 23,000 income support recipients declared receipt of invalid care allowance. It is estimated that, at the same time, the number of households where the claimant and/or the partner was in receipt of housing benefit, but excluding community charge rebate, in Great Britain was around 6,000. The number of invalid care allowance recipients who would qualify for income support, housing benefit or community charge benefit if they claimed it is not known. Just over 10,000 claims to invalid care allowance have been disqualified solely on account of the overlapping benefits regulations, of which around 150 have been dealt with after 1 October 1990. From 1 October 1990, when the carer premium was introduced, all invalid care allowance claimants, who do not qualify for that benefit solely because of the overlapping benefits regulations, are entitled to the carer premium in income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Disability Appeals Tribunals

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will be the medical members on the proposed new disability appeals tribunals.

Mr. Scott: The medical members on the proposed new disability appeal tribunals will be drawn from a panel of medical practitioners appointed by the president of the social security and medical appeal and disability appeal tribunals.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the organisations which responded to the Department's recent consultation on the proposed assessment and adjudication procedures for the disability living allowance; and if he will make a statement on the responses received and on the action he plans to take in the light of these responses.

Mr. Scott: A list of organisations that responded is in the table. In addition, responses were received from other Government Departments and from individual members of the public.

The proposals in the consultation document received widespread support. The move from medical examination toward self-assessment was welcomed unanimously by the organisations representing disabled people, as was the greater emphasis on evidence from health or education professionals familiar with the claimant. The new three-tier adjudication system, giving access to an independent appeal tribunal—the newly constituted Disability Appeal Tribunal—was also seen as a major improvement.

Many organisations made helpful suggestions concerning the claim procedure, aimed at helping to ensure the success of this innovative new system. We are taking close account of these suggestions in drawing up our detailed plans for implementation; and we shall be consulting further, both with disabled people and with their representative organisations, about the claim form and the claim procedure.

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF ORGANISATIONS RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

Organisation
Age Concern
Alzheimer's Disease Association
Association of County Councils
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Attendance Allowance Board
Attendance Allowance Board of Northern Ireland
British Diabetic Association
British Epilepsy Association
British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association
Bromley (London Borough of)
British Medical Association
Cadetcare Associates
Canterbury and Thanet Advice Workers' Group
Centre for Accessible Environments
Cheshire Alliance of Disabled People
Citizens' Rights Office
Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust
Dene Centre
Derbyshire Centre for Integrated Living
DIAL Waltham Forest
Disability Alliance
Disablement Action Group
Disability Benefits Consortium
Disablement Income Group
Disablement Income Group (Scotland)
Greater London Citizens' Advice Bureaux Service
Hackney (London Borough of)
Haemophilia Society
Information Advisory Service
Islington Council
Joint Committee on Mobility for Disabled People
Kent County Council
Lancashire County Council
Leicestershire Association for the Disabled
Leonard Cheshire Foundation
Lewisham (London Borough of)
Mencap
MIND
National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux
National Association for Limbless Disabled
National Deaf Children's Society
Northern Ireland Council on Disability
North Yorkshire Welfare Benefits Unit
Office of the Social Security Commissioners (Northern Ireland)
Pendle District Citizens Advice Bureau
Prince of Wales Advisory Group on Disability
Queen Elizabeth's Foundation for the Disabled
Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR)
Royal National Institute for the Blind
Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped
Social Policy Research Unit (York University)
Social Security Advisory Committee
Social Security and Medical Appeal Tribunals Northern Ireland
Spastics Society
Spinal Injuries Association
Stockport (Metropolitan Borough of)
Terrence Higgins Trust
Thamesdown Law Centre
University of Birmingham
West Midlands Welfare Rights Advisors' Group

Disabled People

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people with disabilities in paid employment work *(a)* less than eight hours, *(b)* fewer than 16 hours and *(c)* more than 16 hours.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that the numbers of people with disabilities in paid work are *(a)* 20,000 people working fewer than eight hours, *(b)* 70,000 people working fewer than 16 hours, and *(c)* 575,000 people working more than 16 hours.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in receipt of a disability-related benefit have mortgage commitments.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated from the family expenditure survey that about 300,000 recipients of the main disability-related benefits have mortgages.

Retirement Pension Forecast Unit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will detail the number of inquiries for each of the last three calendar years received by his retirement pension forecast unit; and if he will detail the number of these inquiries which came from women divorcees seeking information on their pension entitlement.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table:

Year	Number of inquiries	
	Total	Those coming from divorced women
[1,2]1988	154,406	17,197
1989	327,944	36,525
1990	330,080	36,822

[1] May to December 1988.
[2] The Pensions Forecast Unit was set up in May 1988.

SCOTLAND

River Pollution

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times LAW Mining has been convicted for polluting rivers with its opencast coaling operations; and if he will give details of decisions against the company.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available from departmental records. I am, however, informed by the Clyde river purification board that LAW Mining was convicted on three occasions between 1986 and 1989 for water pollution offences resulting from opencast coaling operations at Rigmuir and Dykend; fines of £100, £750 and £1,000 were imposed.

Housing Associations

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the level of direct Government funding for housing associations in Scotland in each year since 1978-79 in real terms.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table.

£ million

Year	Housing association grant	Revenue grant	Housing association grant (at 1989-90 prices)	Revenue grant (at 1989-90 prices)
	Cash terms	Cash terms	Real terms	Real terms
1978-79	22·7	1·6	53·1	3·74
1979-80	35·5	0·8	71·2	1·60
1980-81	50·6	1·3	85·7	2·20
1981-82	82·4	1·4	127·3	2·20
1982-83	104·2	1·2	150·4	1·70
1983-84	115·7	0·7	159·6	0·97
1984-85	127·7	0·4	167·6	0·50
1985-86	104·6	0·5	130·2	0·60
1986-87	106·6	0·6	128·3	0·70
1987-88	114·2	0·4	130·3	0·50
1988-89	150·1	0·5	159·7	0·50
1989-90	202·6	1·2	202·6	1·20

Since 1 April 1989, Scottish Homes has been responsible for the payment of grants to registered housing associations.

Carstairs Hospital

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the number of patients at the state hospital at Carstairs in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of patients as at 31 December in each year was as follows:

	Number
1979	305
1980	328
1981	310
1982	291
1983	268
1984	248
1985	234
1986	227
1987	210
1988	216
1989	229
1990	222

Community Charge

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of extra staff taken on by Scottish local authorities for the collection and administration of the community charge; and if he will provide a breakdown by local authority.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Mentally Ill People (Day Centres)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many registered voluntary organisation day centres for the mentally ill there are in Scotland; where they are; and how many places they have;

(2) how many registered local authority day centres for the mentally ill there are in Scotland; where they are; and how many places they have.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest information, based on reports made to the social work services group, relates to 31 March 1989 and is shown in the table.

Region and sector	Number of centres	Number of places	Number attending
Lothian local authority	1	50	300
Strathclyde local authority	1	35	93
Tayside registered voluntary	2	135	121

A small number of persons who were not mentally ill attended the above centres; and about 30 mentally ill people attended day centres provided mainly for the mentally handicapped.

Secondary School Teachers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average cost of employing an unpromoted teacher in a Scottish secondary school.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average salary cost, including national insurance and superannuation contributions, of an unpromoted teacher in Scottish secondary schools in the current financial year is estimated to be £17,790, from information received from the secretariat of the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education.

Assisted Places

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of pupils receive 100 per cent. payment of private school fees on the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that some 43·5 per cent. of pupils who benefit under the scheme received full fee remission in the current school session.

Education Buildings

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reserves are being made available to local authorities in Scotland for educational building in each of the next three years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The three-year programme for capital expenditure on education will be contained in the departmental report which will be published shortly. My right hon. Friend announced his broad decisions on expenditure priorities on 4 December.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the relevant expenditure for local authorities on which grant from the Scottish Office would be paid in every year since 1979 at 1990-91 prices;

(2) what was the total grant paid to Scottish local authorities by the Scottish Office in each year since 1979 at 1990-91 prices;

(3) what is the total grant to Scottish local authorities expressed as a percentage of total relevant expenditure in each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is set out in the table:

	(1) RSG £ million	(2) Specific Grants £ million	(3) Aggregate Grants (1) + (2) £ million	(4) Aggregate Grants in real terms £ million	(5) Expenditure £ million	(6) Expenditure in real terms £ million	(7) Grant as percentage of Expenditure
1978-79	960·0	79·2	1,039·2	2,626·0	1,671·8	4,224·6	62·2
1979-80	1,090·1	93·0	1,183·1	2,562·3	2,111·9	4,573·8	56·0
1980-81	1,247·9	114·9	1,362·8	2,494·2	2,518·1	4,608·6	54·1
1981-82	1,503·1	136·7	1,639·8	2,736·9	2,799·0	4,671·7	58·6
1982-83	1,677·7	167·6	1,845·3	2,875·6	3,009·6	4,690·0	61·3
1983-84	1,744·3	180·0	1,924·3	2,866·2	3,173·7	4,727·1	60·6
1984-85	1,713·2	216·8	1,930·0	2,735·7	3,358·3	4,760·3	57·5
1985-86	1,691·8	232·2	1,924·0	2,586·4	3,492·7	4,695·1	55·1
1986-87	1,761·4	247·3	2,008·7	2,611·0	3,730·1	4,848·5	53·9
1987-88	1,896·8	295·2	2,192·0	2,702·1	4,023·5	4,959·7	54·5
1988-89	2,037·9	332·6	2,370·5	2,723·3	4,363·4	5,012·8	54·3
1989-90	2,243·8	253·2	2,497·0	2,696·8	4,690·3	5,065·5	53·2
1990-91	2,479·3	289·7	2,769·0	2,769·0	5,131·7	5,131·7	54·0

Notes:

1. The figures in column 1 represent the original amount of rate or revenue support grant awarded for each year. These may have been subject to a later redetermination.
2. In column (5) the figures are for current expenditure including loan and leasing charges and are at final outturn to 1988-89, provisional outturn for 1989-90 and budget estimate for 1990-91.
3. Conversion to real terms figures in columns 4 and 6 is by means of the Treasury GDP deflator (October 1990). All years are at 1990-91 prices.
4. Non-domestic rate income is excluded on the grounds that, although since 1989-90 the level of NDRI has been controlled by central government and formed part of aggregate external finance, this was not the case in earlier years when business rate levels were set by local authorities.

Local Enterprise Company Areas

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the combined budget of the Scottish Development Agency and Training Agency in each of Scottish Enterprise's local enterprise company areas in 1989-90 and 1990-91;

(2) what was the combined budget of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Training Agency in each of the Highlands and Islands Enterprise's local enterprise company areas in 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is not available.

School Leavers

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of school leavers attained (i) university minimum entrance qualifications and (ii) no qualifications in Scotland in 1990 or the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The percentage of school leavers who left during session 1988-89, having attained university minimum entrance qualifications—three or more highers—was 24·4 per cent. and the percentage leaving with no qualifications was 11·9 per cent. These are the latest figures available.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of school leavers left at ages (i) 16 years, (ii) 17 years, and (iii) 18 years or later in Scotland in 1990 or the latest available year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information is listed in the table. This was published by the Scottish Office Education Department in its statistical bulletin: "School Leavers (No. 13/E2/1990)" which is available in the Library.

School Leavers in 1988-89 by age at 31 December

Age	*Percentage*
Under 16	35·5
16 years	35·8
17 years	27·3
18 years or later	1·3
	100·0

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in which locations in the world the Scottish Development Agency has direct, on-the-spot representation by *(a)* an employee and *(b)* an agent; and how these arrangements have changed in the past 10 years.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The international service group of the Scottish Development Agency has one direct representative in the United States of America, and indirect representation in Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary and the USSR. These arrangements have all been established since 1988.

In addition, through its joint sponsorship of Locate in Scotland with the Scottish Office Industry Department, the Scottish Development Agency also has direct representation by employees in the USA—in Stamford, San Mateo, Houston and Chicago—Japan, Hong Kong and Brussels; and indirectly in Australia and Korea. These arrangements have developed and altered over the period since the formation of Locate in Scotland in 1981.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his community care policy for the mentally ill includes an increase in the provision of capital resources for either local authorities or voluntary organisations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Capital grant amounting to £196,000 has been made available in the present financial year to voluntary organisations developing mental health services. This compares with £143,500 in 1989-90. Final decisions have yet to be taken on the allocation of capital grant for 1991-92.

Teachers (Early Retirement)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many teachers have taken early retirement in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following table sets out the numbers of male and female teachers in Scotland who retired on pension before age 60, for reasons of ill-health and for reasons of redundancy or the interests of efficiency, for each of the years 1978-79 to 1988-89, the last year for which figures are available.

Year	*Male*		*Female*		*Total*
	Redundancy/ interests of efficiency	*Ill-health*	*Redundancy/ interests of efficiency*	*Ill-health*	
1978-79	7	30	5	58	100
1979-80	3	37	2	71	113
1980-81	20	32	13	72	137
1981-82	64	43	127	81	315
1982-83	165	56	450	101	772
1983-84	131	65	419	105	720
1984-85	149	83	365	137	734
1985-86	181	81	369	182	813
1986-87	144	82	280	134	640
1987-88	197	59	284	158	698
1988-89	252	87	318	169	826

Hospitals, South Ayrshire

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland who has expressed an interest in national health service status for the South Ayrshire unit comprising the hospitals at Ayr and Ballochmyle.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* The expression of interest in self-governing status for the South Ayrshire unit was formally submitted by the unit general manager. Work on the preparation of business plans is now under way.

Community Charge

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in respect of the 1989-90 community charge transitional relief scheme for Strathclyde regional council *(a)* how many applications have been received, *(b)* how many applications have been approved, *(c)* to how many applicants payment of rebate has been made and *(d)* how much in total has been paid out in rebates.

Mr. Allan Stewart *[holding answer 15 January 1991]:* Regional and islands councils are required to provide

information of the kind requested, together with information on relief paid to former ratepayers who receive relief automatically, in their claims for reimbursement to the Department. No such claim has yet been received from Strathclyde and the information requested is therefore not yet available centrally.

University of Dundee

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many undergraduates entered the university of Dundee in the 1990-91 academic year; and how many of these were from *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I have been asked to reply.

The following provisional information has been obtained from the university of Dundee.

First-year undergraduates at university of Dundee 1990-91 academic year

Domicile	*Total*
England	309
Wales	9
Scotland	625
Northern Ireland	113
Total home domiciled	1,056
Overseas domiciled (including EC)	60
Total	1,116

Source: University of Dundee records.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 17 January 1991

TRANSPORT

Disability

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make it a road traffic offence for able-bodied motorists to park in bays designated for special use by disabled people which are situated either on public highways or car parks serving public buildings.

Mr. Chope: It is already an offence for an able-bodied person to use a parking place reserved for an orange badge holder on the public highway or in a local authority off-street car park which has been designated by an Order made under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. The offence carries a maximum penalty of £400.

My Department has no jurisdiction over spaces in private car parks reserved for disabled people. It is for individual operators of these car parks to take whatever steps they consider necessary to see that these spaces are not misused.

Civil Aviation Authority

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Civil Aviation Authority to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand that my hon. Friend has proposed such an exhibition, which I warmly welcome.

"Vital Transport Statistics 1990"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the report "Vital Travel Statistics 1990" prepared for Transport 2000 in December 1990.

Mr. Chope: Yes.

ENVIRONMENT

Hong Kong

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instigate a study of the work of the independent commission against corruption in Hong Kong; and if he will bring forward proposals to create a similar body to monitor corruption in local Government.

Mr. Key: We consider the existing powers and responsibilities of the Audit Commission and local authority auditors to be adequate.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many copies of departmental circular 1990/21 on local authority responsibilities for public access to information under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, as amended by the Environmental Protection Act 1990, have been printed; and to which individuals and organisations it has been distributed.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 5,500 copies of the circular have been printed. Copies have been distributed to all local authorities at county and district level and to local authority associations in England and Wales.

County Hall, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the future use of County hall, London, SE1.

Mr. Key: Following my answer to the hon. Member on 23 November 1990 at column 226, we announced on 6 December the reopening of the public inquiry on 15 January 1991. The inquiry is in progress.

Housing Investment (Liverpool)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amounts allocated to Liverpool's housing investment programme in each year from 1979 to 1991 inclusive, indicating the change as a percentage each year in real terms.

Mr. Yeo: Liverpool's housing investment programme allocations since 1979-80 are as follows. The percentage changes reflect 1990-91 as the base year for real term calculations.

	Actual allocation £ million	*Percentage change in real terms*
1979-80	42·430	—
1980-81	47·172	− 6·125
1981-82	39·788	−23·079
1982-83	49·337	+15·774
1983-84	41·853	−18·918
1984-85	38·499	−12·460
1985-86	31·000	−23·636
1986-87	27·500	−14·222
1987-88	24·800	−14·476
1988-89	19·653	−26·144
1989-90	15·240	−27·101
1990-91	27·677	+68·155
1991-92	23·400	−20·238

The actual allocations exclude the £24·267 million Liverpool have received from the estate action programme since 1988-89.

Since 1981 authorities have also been able to spend substantial resources generated through the right to buy programme.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the housing investment programme for Liverpool in the light of that city's commitments under the defective housing legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: I have no plans to review Liverpool's housing investment programme allocation. We have taken account of the city's commitments under the housing defects legislation in determining the allocation.

"Greening the Machinery of Government"

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Evironment when he received a copy of the report "Greening the Machinery of Government"; and whether he intends to make any response to the proposals contained in the report.

Mr. Baldry: The director of Friends of the Earth wrote to my right hon. Friend on 20 December enclosing a copy of the report. He will reply to the letter shortly.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is ready to issue a response to the Countryside Commission's policy statement on areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is grateful to the Countryside Commission for revising and updating their policy statement on AONBs and for the opportunity it gives the Government to restate our policies towards the protection and promotion of these valuable areas. Copies of the full text of our response to the Commission's statement have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

AONBs are an important element in this Government's commitment to protect the countryside—for the sake of its beauty, for its diversity of landscape and the wealth of its natural resources, and for its ecological, agricultural and recreational value. The Commission's statement is an important step forward in the protection and enhancement of the countryside and we look forward to seeing it positively applied by all involved.

The formal recognition of the national importance of the natural beauty of an area conferred by AONB designation should be reflected by local authorities in their preparation of structure and local plans and in the exercise of their development control functions. We support the Commission's proposals for statements of intent further to clarify the role and purpose of designation for new AONBs and for management plans to be prepared for existing areas.

We also endorse the Commission's proposals for joint advisory committees and for the appointment of officers to co-ordinate and promote local policies towards each AONB. Following the Government's very generous increase in the commission's grant-in-aid for 1991-92 announced in the Chancellor's autumn statement, we expect to see its programme to appoint AONB officers in 1991-92 expanded and plans for future years brought forward.

Buying Agency

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the future of the Buying agency, the Liverpool-based public procurement agency.

Sir George Young: Following last summer's announcement of the closure of the Crown Suppliers contract furnishing division, we have reviewed the prospects for the Buying agency and concluded that it should become a "next steps" agency as soon as practicable after 1 April 1991.

DEFENCE

Irradiated Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice or guidance he intends to give to the forces about the use of irradiated food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: To date the Ministry of Defence has not knowingly procured food treated by ionising radiation. Of the classes of food which, under the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1990, may now be irradiated we do not envisage large scale procurement of such products, given the current high cost involved in processing food in such a way. However, if we were to purchase permitted irradiated foods, we would follow the requirements detailed in the Food Labelling (Amendment) (Irradiated Food) Regulations 1990.

Armed Forces (Equipment and Manpower)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will impose a moratorium for the time being on any further rundown in equipment or manpower for the armed forces.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are continuing to refine the detail of the broad proposals announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in July. In doing so we are mindful of the need to sustain both the effectiveness and morale of British forces in the Gulf.

The Gulf

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current approximate daily cost of British involvement in the Gulf area.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 16 January the approximate full daily operating cost of our forces in the Gulf area was estimated to be £3·6 million per day.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Meteorological Office has assessed the possible environmental impacts of oil wells in Kuwait being set alight during any hostilities in the Gulf.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Meteorological Office has produced a note for the Government on the possible environmental impacts of burning oil wells in Kuwait. I am placing a copy of this note in the Library of the House. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be taking forward further work on this subject.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *537*, if he has any further information on decisions taken by the Supreme Soviet on methods of destruction of chemical weapons; and whether the United Kingdom offered the Soviet Union any technical assistance in the matter.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I understand that the subject of chemical weapons destruction is still under discussion within the Supreme Soviet with no final decision having yet been made on the nature and location of chemical weapons destruction facilities.

The United States-Soviet bilateral agreement signed on 1 June 1990 allows for exchange of destruction technology between the State parties. In the past the United Kingdom has described to the Soviet Union the methods that we have used to destroy our chemical weapons.

Operation Granby

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date of British involvement in Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total full operating cost to 16 January of the United Kingdom's military involvement in the Gulf is estimated to be in excess of £900 million.

Medical Reservists

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the response to his call up of medical reservists; how many of those who volunteered were accepted and how many compulsory call out notices were issued; how many reservists compulsorily called up did not respond and what action is being taken against them; what are the skills of those who have volunteered or been called up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am pleased to be able to report that the call-out of medical reservists was successful and that the requirement was met in full. In the case of the Army, 894 vacancies were filled by volunteers. Compulsory call-out notices were sent to a further 408 medical personnel, and 126 personnel were compulsorily called out.

A total of 94 Army reservists failed to respond to the call-out notice. We are still investigating the reasons. Some will have been ill or out of the country. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that legal action may be brought against the few who cannot provide an adequate explanation of their failure to attend.

The Army reservists are medical specialists with a variety of skills, including surgeons, doctors, anaesthetists, dentists, nurses, physiotherapists and medical technicians.

Turning to the RAF, I am also pleased to say that the compulsory call-out of No. 4626 aeromedical evacuation squadron of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force was successful. Call-out notices were issued to all squadron personnel who all responded and made themselves available at their unit. The squadron comprises doctors, nurses, medical assistants and support staff.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Offices, Essex

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what employment offices he has plans to close in Essex; and if he will give in each case grounds.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service Executive Agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive, to whom I have referred this question for reply.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each civil defence region *(a)* the name of the current chief regional scientific adviser, *(b)* the date of appointment of the current chief regional scientific adviser, *(c)* the age of the current chief regional scientific adviser, *(d)* the employment of the current chief regional scientific adviser at the time of his appointment as chief regional scientific adviser and *(e)* the amounts paid to each chief regional scientific adviser in each of the last five years in the form of salary, retainer and expenses.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office has responsibility for appointing a chief regional scientific adviser (CRSA) for the nine home defence regions in England and Wales. The Scottish Home and Health Department and Northern Ireland Office have similar responsibilities for their own home defence regions.

CRSAs are not paid either a salary or a retainer as part of their civil defence duties. They are paid expenses as professional lecturing fees together with costs for travel and subsistence in the course of civil defence activities.

A table giving the details requested for each of the CRSAs in England and Wales has been placed in the Library.

Satellites

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future ownership and use of the Marco Polo satellite.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: British Sky Broadcasting operates five television channels on DBS frequencies via the Marco Polo satellite, which it owns. Under the terms of an agreement to be entered into between the Independent Television Commission and BSkyB, the DBS programme contract originally entered into between the Independent Broadcasting Authority and British Satellite Broadcasting Ltd. would be allowed to run until 30 December 1992. From 30 June 1991 the ITC would be able to withdraw all or any or part of any of the DBS channels for use by domestic satellite licensees appointed by it under the terms of the Broadcasting Act 1990. BSkyB would make capacity on the Marco Polo satellites available to such licensees until the end of 1992 and beyond.

Child Refugees

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if it is the considered policy of Her Majesty's Government to admit child refugees from Eritrea and elsewhere who have no means of supporting themselves in Britain; what representations he has received from London local authorities about the cost of their support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: All applications for asylum in the United Kingdom from individuals claiming to be refugees are assessed against the criteria of the 1951 United Nations convention on refugees. Age is no bar to qualifications for refugee status and applications from children are considered individually on their merits. Child applicants, like adult asylum seekers, may remain here while their

applications are determined. With regard to representations made by London local authorities, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 17 December 1990 at column *62*.

Mr. Michael Thynne

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects the Parole Board to carry out the review of the life sentence passed upon Mr. Michael Thynne, currently detained in Her Majesty's prison, Bristol.

Mrs. Rumbold: Mr. Thynne's case will be referred to the local review committee at the prison where he is then detained in February 1992 as the first stage of a further review by the Parole Board.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether proposals for changes to the magistrates courts system will extend beyond administrative improvements to existing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We have not yet reached decisions on the reorganisation proposals in the report of the scrutiny of magistrates courts. We are still considering the views expressed by interested bodies in the light of the assessment by independent consultants last year of the costs of implementation.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to ensure that savings obtained through the cash limiting of the magistrates courts in England and Wales will not reduce the efficiency of the magistrates courts system or prolong judicial processes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: We are consulting the representative bodies of the magistrates courts service and the local authority associations about the mechanics of cash limiting current grant. The proposals underpinning the consultations envisage the allocation of grant to magistrates' courts committee areas by a formula based on variables including the number of weighted cases completed in those areas and which is intended not only to reflect the different needs of different committees in providing a standard level of service but also to create incentives for the more effective and efficient management of court business without interfering with the courts' independent judicial functions.

Community Charge

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the chief constables of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Northumbria, South Yorkshire, West Midlands and West Yorkshire about the effects of plans to cap the community charge in their areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The chief constables of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Northumbria, South Yorkshire and West Midlands, and the deputy chief constable of West Yorkshire, wrote to the then Home Secretary before Christmas about their financial concerns. My noble friend Lord Ferrers met the chief constable of West Midlands among other members of a delegation from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 18 December to discuss these issues.

Breath Tests

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the total number of breath tests conducted by each of the police forces in England and Wales during the period covering the recent festive season and *(b)* the number which proved positive.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The official breath test statistics for 1990 will not be available until later this year. The Association of Chief Police Officers has, however, collected provisional figures for the number of screening breath tests, along with the positive results, carried out in each police force area between 19 December 1990 and 1 January 1991. These are given in the table:

Police force area	*Number of breath tests*	*Total positive breath tests*
Avon and Somerset	754	113
Bedfordshire	962	54
Cambridgeshire	1,600	47
Cheshire	1,032	106
City of London	98	10
Cleveland	794	52
Cumbria	611	56
Derbyshire	818	67
Devon and Cornwall	1,830	152
Dorset	527	47
Durham	750	72
Dyfed Powys	612	52
Essex	3,107	148
Gloucestershire	383	59
Greater Manchester	5,799	425
Gwent	1,319	53
Hampshire	1,762	164
Hertfordshire	613	74
Humberside	1,168	95
Kent	2,101	134
Lancashire	1,764	131
Leicestershire	1,413	86
Lincolnshire	1,294	50
Merseyside	697	149
Metropolitan Police	18,075	838
Norfolk	2,992	53
Northamptonshire	1,097	50
Northumbria	470	157
North Wales	2,235	87
North Yorkshire	925	60
Nottinghamshire	3,462	114
South Wales	1,395	150
South Yorkshire	1,271	133
Staffordshire	947	98
Suffolk	1,235	51
Surrey	1,411	81
Sussex	1,100	95
Thames Valley	4,620	199
Warwickshire	527	50
West Mercia	891	100
West Midlands	2,254	304
West Yorkshire	1,493	230
Wiltshire	975	60
Total	79,183	5,297

Broadcasting (Programme Information)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has held with the chair and members of the Independent Television Commission

regarding the intention of the television and radio franchise holders to charge newspapers for programme information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has not held any discussions with the chairman or members of the Independent Television Commission on this issue. The use of programme information is a matter for commercial arrangements between broadcasters and those who wish to publish the information. The Broadcasting Act 1990 makes provision for adjudication by the copyright tribunal if a publisher considers that the fee being charged by the broadcaster is unreasonable.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Agricultural Efficiency

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North dated 18 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *132*, if he will show the efficiency in terms of gross value added per annual labour unit of agriculture and all other major sectors of industry in Britain.

Mr. Curry: Information on gross value added per head in other sectors of industry in the United Kingdom is contained in pages 10-37 of the "Business Monitor: Report on the Census of Production—Summary Volume, 1988", available in the Library of the House. These estimates are not fully comparable with those for agriculture contained in my reply of 18 December: they relate to total numbers employed whereas, for agriculture, the denominator is annual labour units (reflecting full time worker equivalents). Furthermore, comparisons between sectors should be interpreted cautiously because of the differing degrees of support and protection embodied in the value added of each sector and because of different deployments of labour and capital.

Food Safety

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advice he has given to local authorities about the operation of the new food safety regulations which implement the Food Safety Act 1990.

Mr. Gummer: Under section 40 of the Food Safety Act Ministers may issue codes of practice for local authorities on the enforcement of the Act and regulations made under it. Seven codes of practice on a range of enforcement aspects were issued to come into operation on 1 January 1991. Copies of the codes have been placed in the Library of the House. Further codes are in preparation.

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the outcome of his examination of the relationship between the new committees on microbiological safety of food and the existing committees in the food area.

Mr. Maclean: Yes. I have concluded a change in the terms of references is required in order to take account of the new committees. Consequently the revised terms of reference for the Food Advisory Committee are:

"To assess the risk to humans of chemicals which are used or occur in or on food and to advise Ministers on the exercise of powers in the Food Safety Act 1990 relating to the labelling, composition and chemical safety of food. In exercising its functions the Food Advisory Committee will take the advice and work of the Committee on Toxicity and other relevant advisory committees into account."

In addition, the Steering Group for Food Surveillance is to be renamed the Steering Group on Chemical Aspects of Food Surveillance and its revised terms of reference are: "to identify through surveillance the need for action to ensure the chemical safety and nutritional adequacy of food".

Fisheries Council

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Fisheries Council meeting, held on 19 and 20 December 1990.

Mr. Curry: The United Kingdom secured a good package consistent with conservation at the December Council.

Irradiated Food

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of when irradiated food will be on sale in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Since the possibility of licensing under the Food (Control of Irradiation) Regulations 1991 was introduced only on 1 January it is too early for any meaningful estimate to be made.

Set-aside Scheme

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of farmers who have received payment under the set-aside scheme for *(a)* tourist facilities, *(b)* football ptiches, *(c)* golf courses, *(d)* game reserves and *(e)* nature reserves; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, the following break-down of set-aside undertakings under the non-agricultural use option may be of assistance:

Total number of undertakings relating to land set aside under the non-agricultural use option in England in the first two years of the scheme

	Number	*Per cent.*
Horse-based activities (including livery stables, riding schools, stud farms, etc)	536	(76)
Golf courses	46	(7)
Game cover for commercial shoots	32	(5)
Sports grounds	24	(3)
Recreational facilities (including camping sites, nature trails, etc)	15	(2)
Other	54	(7)
Total	707	(100)

Note: Set-aside entrants may enter more than one non-agricultural use option.

Veterinary Investigations Service

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce his plans following his review of the veterinary investigations service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The review has been a very thorough one and its implications needed to be considered in detail. Those considerations are now in their final stages and I expect to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Milk Imports

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the dates when China, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and the USSR restricted imports of milk; if he will list the quantities of milk imported from the United Kingdom for the full year prior to the restriction being imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The dates when the countries in question restricted imports of milk and milk products from the United Kingdom were:

	Date
China	[1]precise date unknown
Egypt	1 July 1990
Jordan	[2]29 July 1990
Syria	[3]29 August 1990
Tunisia	20 January 1990
Turkey	25 May 1990
USSR	10 April 1990

[1] Notification received 30 October 1990.
[2] Notification received 3 September 1990.
[3] Notification received 14 January 1991.

The quantities of milk and milk products imported from the United Kingdom for the previous full year (1989) were, in tonnes:

	Milk, cream and other milk products (other than butter or cheese)	*Butter and other fats and oils derived from milk*	*Cheese and curd*
China	2,718	—	—
Egypt	1,334	175	141
Jordan	550	34	26
Syria	—	—	—
Tunisia	—	—	—
Turkey	118	2	39
USSR	—	1	—

We have been in frequent contact with all the countries which have imposed restrictions. Both the European Community and the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) have clearly stated that milk and milk products present no risk from BSE.

With the help of these bodies we shall continue to make every effort to have these unjustified restrictions lifted.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Harris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to set a final date for the notification of milk quota transfers in England and Wales in 1990-91.

Mr. Curry: Following consultations with the industry and in exercise of powers provided by the Dairy Produce Quotas Regulations I have decided that milk quota transfers notified after 22 April will have no effect on the calculation of supplementary levy liability for 1990-91, even if they are notified as having occurred during that year.

Intervention Stores

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what quantities of *(a)* grain and *(b)* butter were held in intervention stores in (i) Humberside and (ii) Lincolnshire at the latest available date and the equivalent date one year ago.

Mr. Curry: Since the question concerns matters which are the direct responsibility of the chief executive of the Intervention Board, I am asking him to write directly to the hon. Member.

Wildlife and Landscape Conservation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the dates and locations of *(a)* national and *(b)* regional training courses on wildlife and landscape conservation that have been held for Agricultural Development Advisory Service officers in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: National and regional training courses on landscape and wildlife conservation held in 1990 for Agricultural Development and Advisory Service advisers were as follows:

Location	*Date*
National courses	
Worcestershire	February
London	March
Shropshire	June
Shropshire	September
Shropshire	September
Shropshire	November
Regional courses	
Yorkshire	May
Yorkshire	May
Worcestershire	May
Warwickshire	June
Warwickshire	June
Somerset	June
West Sussex	July
Dyfed	September
Cambridgeshire	November

This programme of training courses proved sufficient in practice to ensure that all ADAS officers received appropriate training in landscape and wildlife conservation. For this reason two of the proposed regional training courses referred to in an earlier answer to the hon. Member did not take place.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North dated 23 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *217*, if he will show the total expenditure on State education in actual and 1989 prices, in 1961, 1970, 1980 and 1989, showing the per cent. increase at 1989 prices; and the amount spent on teachers' salaries and related costs in each case, in actual 1989 prices and in per cent. terms, and also the per cent. increase in each case since 1980.

Mr. Eggar: Data for 1961 are not readily available. The earliest year for which data are available on a comparable

basis is 1968-69. The data for that and the subsequent years on total education spending, and on spending on school teachers' salaries in England, are as follows:

Total education spending

	Cash terms	*1989-90 prices*	*Increase over previous year*	*Increase since 1980*
	£ billion	*£ billion*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1968-69	2·1	15·2	—	—
1970-71	2·6	16·5	9	—
1980-81	12·9	21·9	33	—
1988-89	22·0	23·4	7	7
1989-90	24·1	24·1	3	10

Teachers' salaries

	Cash terms	*1989-90 prices*	*Increase over previous year*	*Increase since 1980*
	£ billion	*£ billion*	*Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1968-69	0·5	3·7	—	—
1970-71	0·6	4·1	11	—
1980-81	3·7	6·3	54	—
1988-89	6·6	7·0	11	11
1989-90	n/a	n/a	—	—

Notes to tables:

1. The total education spending figures are drawn from the education tables of the relevant Public Expenditure White Papers.
2. The figures for spending on teachers' salaries are drawn from local authority spending returns. Data for 1989-90 are not yet available. Spending on teachers' salaries includes on-costs such as superannuation. No account is taken of changes in teacher numbers over the period shown.
3. The columns headed "increase over previous year" show the increase in spending at 1989-90 prices over the previous year.
4. The figures at 1989-90 prices have been calculated using latest GDP deflators.

Iraqi Students

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) pursuant to his reply of 14 January, if he will give a breakdown of the courses taken by the 900 Iraqi postgraduate students who attended British universities during 1986-87;

(2) how many students from Iraq are enrolled on postgraduate courses at British universities and colleges of higher education during the current university year; and if he will give a breakdown of the courses they are attending.

Mr. Alan Howarth: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Under-fives

Ms. Hilary Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns *491-92*, when he expects the information for 1990 on the percentage of under-fives in nursery schools, nursery classes and infant classes by local education authority in England to be available.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested for January 1990 is given in the following table:

Percentage of under fives in maintained nursery and primary schools in rank order in each local education authority—January 1990

	All under Fives	*Nursery schools*	*Nursery classes*	*Primary classes*
South Tyneside	94	21	37	36
Walsall	91	11	46	34
North Tyneside	91	6	50	35
Salford	87	15	38	34
Liverpool	86	4	46	36
Sandwell	76	2	42	32
Cleveland	75	1	54	20
Knowsley[1]	74	—	42	31
Tameside	74	5	35	33
Doncaster[1]	74	—	41	33
Wolverhampton	72	12	45	15
Durham	71	17	23	31
Newcastle upon Tyne	70	9	31	30
Manchester	70	4	51	16
Hounslow[1]	70	—	66	3
Barking[1]	69	—	35	34
Wakefield	69	6	42	22
Solihull[1]	69	—	35	35
Bolton	68	7	30	31
Sunderland	68	12	24	32
Barnsley	67	3	47	17
Haringey	67	4	34	28
Gateshead	67	1	33	32
Oldham[1]	67	—	34	33
St. Helens	65	2	31	32
Sefton	65	4	28	33
Bury	63	3	26	33
Birmingham	63	8	24	31
Northumberland	63	2	28	32
Sheffield	62	6	39	18
Rochdale	62	14	17	31
Calderdale[1]	61	—	28	32
Merton[1]	60	—	40	21
Leeds	60	2	40	19
Derbyshire	60	7	31	22
Ealing	60	7	28	26
Nottinghamshire	58	2	46	10
Brent	57	4	28	26
Bradford	57	3	32	21
Kingston upon Thames	57	7	24	26
Coventry	57	5	20	32
Wirral	57	3	21	33
Kirklees	57	6	32	20
Wigan	57	2	23	32
Humberside	56	5	30	22
Rotherham	56	5	35	16
Cumbria	56	7	16	33
Newham	55	13	41	1
Cheshire	54	3	18	32
Barnet	54	7	22	25
Northamptonshire	54	4	16	33
Hillingdon	51	2	47	2
Enfield[1]	50	—	20	30
Dudley	49	4	30	16
Warwickshire	49	6	11	32
Inner London	49	7	29	13
Avon	48	7	10	31
Staffordshire	48	7	15	26
Lancashire	48	9	8	31
North Yorkshire	48	2	18	28
Stockport	48	11	6	31
Hertfordshire	47	6	23	17
Waltham Forest	47	5	30	12
Cornwall[3]	45	1	13	31
Cambridgeshire	45	4	7	33
Richmond upon Thames	45	2	17	26
Harrow[1]	45	—	16	29
Isle of Wight [1]	43	—	7	36
Havering[1]	39	—	4	35
Leicestershire	38	0	22	16
Bedfordshire	38	8	23	7
East Sussex	38	2	6	30

	All under Fives	Nursery schools	Nursery classes	Primary classes
Dorset[1]	38	—	6	33
Croydon	35	5	2	28
Norfolk	34	2	3	28
Shropshire	34	2	11	22
Somerset[1]	33	—	1	33
Lincolnshire	32	2	6	23
Suffolk	31	1	15	15
Sutton	31	6	25	0
Gloucestershire[2]	31	—	—	31
Bexley	30	3	12	14
Trafford[1]	30	—	22	7
Devon	28	1	10	16
Redbridge[1]	27	—	13	14
Berkshire	26	10	15	1
Surrey	24	2	9	13
Hereford & Worcester[1]	22	—	7	15
Hampshire	21	1	4	16
Essex	21	1	5	15
Buckinghamshire	18	3	7	9
Wiltshire[1]	18	—	3	16
Oxfordshire	18	6	9	4
Kent	17	0	5	12
Bromley[1]	17	—	2	15
West Sussex	10	3	1	6
ENGLAND	46	4	21	22

Note:—
[1] Have no Nursery Schools
[2] Have no Nursery Schools or Nursery Classes
[3] Includes Isles of Scilly

Special Schools

Ms. Hilary Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of pupils belonging to each local education authority attending special schools maintained by other local education authorities in January 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is set out in the table:

The number of pupils belonging to local education authorities attending special schools maintained by other local education authorities as recorded on returns made to the Department of Education

	January 1989	January 1990
City of London	6	5
Camden	125	123
Greenwich	119	115
Hackney	222	213
Hammersmith	103	100
Islington	167	149
Kensington	208	196
Lambeth	273	240
Lewisham	195	194
Southwark	237	236
Tower Hamlet	114	111
Wandsworth	206	181
Westminster	161	151
Barking	32	31
Barnet	77	89
Bexley	81	75
Brent	76	74
Bromley	34	25
Croydon	56	55
Ealing	71	74
Enfield	117	101
Haringey	92	91
Harrow	52	46
Havering	47	47
Hillingdon	43	42
Hounslow	25	26
Kingston	18	17
Merton	78	64
Newham	59	61
Redbridge	61	74
Richmond	36	35
Sutton	52	49
Waltham Forest	23	19
Birmingham	42	30
Coventry	18	18
Dudley	71	72
Sandwell	76	74
Solihull	40	38
Walsall	20	23
Wolverhampton	11	13
Knowsley	38	23
Liverpool	35	26
St. Helens	33	33
Sefton	25	22
Wirral	28	20
Bolton	77	64
Bury	77	75
Manchester	48	47
Oldham	20	23
Rochdale	45	61
Salford	33	25
Stockport	55	41
Tameside	78	76
Trafford	34	37
Wigan	41	31
Barnsley	27	18
Doncaster	16	8
Rotherham	44	39
Sheffield	7	5
Bradford	20	47
Calderdale	23	25
Kirklees	47	46
Leeds	15	20
Wakefield	63	32
Gateshead	21	29
Newcastle	26	17
North Tyne	31	30
South Tyne	27	32
Sunderland	15	12
Avon	34	21
Bedfordshire	30	21
Berkshire	62	65
Buckinghamshire	83	84
Cambridgeshire	19	13
Cheshire	108	85
Cleveland	16	18
Cornwall	18	18
Cumbria	12	10
Derbyshire	61	46
Devon	13	9
Dorset	10	12
Durham	68	65
East Sussex	57	46
Essex	166	205
Gloucestershire	16	12
Hampshire	100	86
Hereford and Worcester	32	18
Hertfordshire	82	63
Humberside	43	38
Isle of Wight	3	6
Kent	74	56
Lancashire	110	100
Leicestershire	22	27
Lincolnshire	26	31
Norfolk	22	20
North Yorkshire	70	58
Northamptonshire	47	36

	January 1989	*January 1990*
Northumberland	31	42
Nottinghamshire	43	33
Oxfordshire	19	17
Shropshire	30	28
Somerset	21	13
Staffordshire	58	49
Suffolk	30	35
Surrey	103	67
Warwickshire	84	79
West Sussex	33	32
Wiltshire	36	43

THE ARTS

London Arts Board

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he expects to announce the chairman for the London Arts Board; and if he will make a statement on the future of the London Arts Board.

Mr. Tim Renton: I expect to receive proposals concerning the London Arts Board from the Arts Council in due course.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Taxes and Benefits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* up-to-date figures, using 1990-91 prices, but otherwise on the same basis as those provided in his answer to the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) of 10 January 1989, *Official Report*, columns *624-47*.

Mr. Maude: Updated figures for 1990-91 are given in the table. For earlier years, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) on 5 July 1990 jat column *699*. The figures given in that reply at 1988-89 prices may be converted to 1990-91 prices in line with the Autumn Statement forecast by multiplying by a factor of 1·19.

Income tax, NICS, and indirect taxes as multiples of average earnings, 1990-91

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·50	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	24·04	43·28	62·53	101·91	163·49	286·65	409·81	532·97	779·29	1,148·77	2,380·37
NICS	10·64	17·56	24·49	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	11·65	15·60	24·22	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	17·22	21·50	30·85	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	34·68	89·71	124·12	185·26	191·77	314·93	438·09	561·25	807·57	1,177·05	2,408·65
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	15·6	18·7	20·3	22·1	26·5	31·0	33·3	34·6	36·2	37·3	38·7
NICS	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	3·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	5·0	5·1	5·2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	7·5	7·0	6·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	22·5	38·8	40·4	40·1	31·1	34·1	35·6	36·4	37·5	38·2	39·2
Married, no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	15·77	35·01	54·26	92·75	150·26	273·42	396·58	519·74	766·06	1,135·54	2,367·14
NICS	10·64	17·56	24·49	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	10·77	15·07	24·53	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	19·07	23·36	32·81	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	26·41	82·41	117·18	178·37	178·54	301·70	424·86	548·02	794·34	1,163·82	2,395·42
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	10·2	15·2	17·6	20·1	24·4	29·6	32·2	33·8	35·5	36·9	38·4
NICS	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	3·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·7	4·9	5·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·3	7·6	7·1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	17·1	35·8	38·1	38·6	29·0	32·7	34·5	35·6	36·8	37·8	38·9
Married, both working											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·32	20·57	39·81	78·30	116·79	203·55	313·75	436·91	683·23	1,052·71	2,284·31
NICS	7·42	14·34	21·27	35·13	47·23	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56	56·56
VAT	—	12·27	16·93	26·27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	21·97	25·81	33·49	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	8·74	69·15	103·82	173·19	164·02	260·11	370·31	493·47	739·79	1,109·27	2,340·87
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·9	8·9	12·9	17·0	19·0	22·0	25·5	28·4	31·7	34·2	37·1
NICS	4·8	6·2	6·9	7·6	7·7	6·1	4·6	3·7	2·6	1·8	0·9
VAT	—	5·3	5·5	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Multiples of average earnings										
	0·50	*0·75*	*1*	*1·5*	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*7*	*10*	*20*
Other indirect	—	9·5	8·4	7·3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	5·7	29·9	33·7	37·6	26·7	28·1	30·1	32·1	34·3	36·0	38·0
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Income tax	1·27	20·51	39·76	78·25	135·76	258·92	382·08	505·24	751·56	1,121·04	2,352·64
NICS	10·64	17·56	24·49	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28	28·28
VAT	—	10·58	15·45	26·16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	18·55	21·99	29·54	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	11·91	67·20	101·69	162·23	164·04	287·20	410·36	533·52	779·84	1,149·32	2,380·92
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax	0·8	8·9	12·9	17·0	22·0	28·0	31·0	32·9	34·8	36·4	38·2
NICS	6·9	7·6	8·0	6·1	4·6	3·1	2·3	1·8	1·3	0·9	0·5
VAT	—	4·6	5·0	5·7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other indirect	—	8·0	7·1	6·4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	7·7	29·1	33·0	35·2	26·6	31·1	33·3	34·7	36·1	37·3	38·7

Notes to tables

(1) Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax relief other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay class 1 NI contributions at the contracted rate. The figures for NI contributions are financial year averages.

(2) From 1990-91 husbands and wives will be taxed independently. Previously the tax liability of couples depended on their joint income. To permit comparisons with earlier years the table therefore shows income tax and National Insurance Contributions paid by a married couple in 1990-91 as a proportion of their joint income, assuming, as in the earlier years, that where both partners are earners, the husband and wife share the relevant multiple of earnings in the ratio 60 : 40.

(3) In order to provide comparability with 1978-79, when support for children was given partly through child tax allowances, child benefit is treated as a negative income tax for the married couple with two children.

(4) Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are estimated to be £307·90 per week in 1990-91, using the Government Actuary Department's assumption of 10 per cent. growth over 1989-90 as published in the 1990 autumn statement.

(5) The estimates of indirect taxes are derived from the 1985 family expenditure survey, and are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved. There are wide variations in spending patterns between households with the same composition and similar incomes and estimated payments of VAT and other indirect taxes are therefore approximate, even within the income range for which figures are shown. Outside this range the margin of error is even higher and reliable estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between the estimates obtained from family expenditure surveys for different years.

Football Clubs

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Football League clubs took advantage of the Inland Revenue's amnesty on illegal payments to players; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: There was no such amnesty.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made with the Bank of England inquiry into developments both before and after the announcement of Britain's entry into the exchange rate mechanism on 5 October.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the answer that my right hon. Friend the then Chancellor gave to the hon. Gentleman on 23 October 1990 at column *196*. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence that the decision to join the ERM was prematurely disclosed, he should declare it to the appropriate authorities.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a further statement on the public expenditure planning total for 1991-92.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales have today announced increases in central Government expenditure on a new scheme for community charge reduction and other forms of support for local authorities of some £1·1 billion in 1991-92, net of savings on community charge benefit.

The £1·1 billion net increase in central Government support for local authorities will be added to next year's public expenditure planning total. There will, however, be no change in projected local authority expenditure as a result of this switch in financing, and therefore no increase in total public expenditure as measured by general government expenditure (GGE). Local authority expenditure will continue moreover to be subject to capping.

On financing, the Government's strategy remains to balance the budget over the medium term. The decisions announced today do not alter that policy and will be taken into account in framing the Budget proposals.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Management Training (Czechoslovakia)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will place in the Library a copy of the report of the sector reconnaisance mission on management training to Czechoslovakia.

Mrs. Chalker: I have today placed copies in the Library.

Educational Projects (Czechoslovakia)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cash value of the know-how fund for educational projects in Czechoslovakia; and whether he will list those United Kingdom organisations who have been awarded contracts under it, giving the purpose and duration of each project and its pound sterling value.

Mrs. Chalker: Expenditure under the know-how fund for Czechoslovakia in 1990-91 is estimated at £2 million. Projects designed to transfer know-how to Czechoslovakia are listed below by sector, including the name of the United Kingdom organisation responsible for project implementation.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MACROECONOMIC ADVICE

Title: *Assistance for Privatisation*
Description: A team of privatisation advisers will undertake a six month assignment to advise the Czechoslovak Privatisation Agency.
Contract: Ernst & Young, Shroders and Denton Hall.
Status: September 1990-March 1991.
Cost: £450,000.

Title: *Banking Training*
Description: A visit to assess the training needs of the Czechoslovak banking sector.
Contract: Grayson-Bennett Associates.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £12,000.

Title: Banking Training
Description: A programme of six two week seminars for senior managers of various banks in Czechoslovakia.
Contract: Grayson-Bennett Associates.
Status: January to May 1991.
Cost: £70,000.

Title: *Assistance to the Ceskoslovenska Obchodnoi Banka*
Description: Two consultants will work alongside bank staff as part of a team finalising the evaluation of an integrated software package.
Contract: IDOM.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £14,500.

Title: *Assistance to the Komercni Banka*
Description: The placement of ten Czechoslovak bankers, selected by the Komercni Banka, with British clearing banks, mainly in their documentary credits departments in order to obtain practical, working experience of international commercial banking business.
Contract: Chartered Institute of Bankers.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £35,000.

Title: *Assistance to the Investicni Banka*
Description: Barclays Bank to provide a three day training course to two employees of the Investicni Banka in the issue of Certificates of Deposit.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £900.

Title: *Accountancy Training*
Description: The placement of eight Czechoslovak accountants selected by the Ministry of Finance with British accountancy firms.
Contract: Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £13,000.

Title: *Workshops on Tax Structure and Public Finance*
Description: A programme of workshops to examine tax requirements and procedures resulting from the changes in Czechoslovakia. In addition there will be inward and outward visits by researchers and the provision of computer equipment.
Contract: Institute of Fiscal Studies.
Status: September 1990 to September 1992.
Cost: £25,000.

Title: *Insurance Sector*
Description: To help establish a new insurance company.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £140,700.

Title: *Advice to the Federal Minister of Economy and the Chairman of the State Bank*
Description: The payment of air fares for up to fifteen visits per year to Prague by Mr. Stanley Rudcenko, Vice President and Chief Economist at the Bankers Trust and one of an informal group of advisers to the Chairman of the State Bank and Federal Ministry of Economy.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £6,000.

Title: *Secondment to the Federal Ministry of Economy*
Description: The secondment of Dr. Drabek of the World Bank to act as a Principal Economic adviser to both the Ministry of Economy and the Czech Ministry of Strategic Planning.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £50,000.

Title: *Economics for Senior Officials*
Description: A programme of lectures and seminars to introduce senior Czechoslovak officials to market economics, and in particular the contemporary economic issues affecting government policy.
Contract: Birbeck College.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £9,500.

Title: *Support for World Bank Structural Adjustment Mission*
Description: Covering the costs of two United Kingdom experts taking part in a World Bank mission looking at the social safety net in Czechoslovakia as a precursor to a major structural adjustment loan.
Status: January 1991.
Cost: £20,000.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Title: *Development of Employment Services in Slovakia*
Description: A short visit by two Employment Service officials to Slovakia to ascertain needs in the employment sector.
Contract: Department of Employment.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £3,000.

Title: *Training for Employment Services Managers*
Description: The Employment Service are to provide a number of courses for the Czechoslovak equivalent of Jobcentre managers.
Contract: Department of Employment.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £53,000.

Title: *Training and Retraining of Adults*
Description: Up to ten Czechoslovak officials will visit the United Kingdom for two weeks to look at adult training facilities and policy.
Contract: Department of Employment.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £39,300.

Title: *Development of Employment Services*
Description: A visit by United Kingdom Employment Service officials to Czechoslovakia to look at existing arrangements for dealing with unemployment and a return visit by officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to discuss with institutions in the United Kingdom the handling of unemployment issues.
Contract: Department of Employment.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £19,600.

Title: *Secondment to the Prime Minister's Office*
Description: The Department of Employment have seconded an official to the Czechoslovak Prime Minister's to advise on the employment and other implications of the economic reform programme.
Contract: Department of Employment.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £50,000.

Title: *Secondment to Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs*
Description: An official will be seconded to the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs for a nine month period to co-ordinate and develop the programme of assistance in the labour field under KHF auspices.
Contract: Department of Employment.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £20,000.

MANAGEMENT TRAINING
Title: *Management Training in the Telecommunications Sector*
Description: The training of ten senior executives in the Czechoslovak Federal Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications.
Contract: British Telecom.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £58,800.

Title: *Management Training in the Construction Sector*
Description: A pilot management training course for the construction sector.
Contract: Intrinsic Marketing.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £57,950.

ENVIRONMENT
Title: *Study of Environmental Problems of North Bohemia*
Description: A programme of visits by environmental scientists aimed at producing a report for the Czechoslovak government to better understand the environmental problems of north Bohemia and to develop a realistic programme for their solution, including sources of finance.
Contract: Department of the Environment.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £12,000.

Title: *Establishment of an Industry and Conservation Association in Bratislava*
Description: A programme of visits and consultancy advice aimed at improving the handling of environmental problems in the local political economy by developing partnerships between industry, environmental NGO's and local government.
Contract: Nature Conservancy Council.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £28,000.

EDUCATION AND ELT
Title: *Prince of Wales Scholarships*
Description: Two Czechoslovak students will be sponsored to attend courses at Atlantic College, Wales.
Status: The two students took up their courses in October 1990.
Cost: £9,300.

Title: *Book Sector Study*
Description: A study to consider all factors relevant to educational book development which will form the basis for a more detailed book development programme to be linked to an IBRD contribution to this sector.
Contract: International Book Development.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £44,500.

Title: *English Language Teaching In-Service Seminar*
Description: A two week seminar in Bratislava to prepare teachers for the introduction of new English teaching materials and methodology.
Contract: British Council.Status: Completed.
Cost: £10,500.

Title: *Russian Teachers' Conversion Course*
Description: The British Council are to organise a three month intensive teacher training/conversion course for Czech and Slovak teachers of Russian to prepare them for English teaching duties in state primary and secondary schools.
Contract: Bell Educational Trust.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £195,000.

Title: *English Language Training for the State Bank.*
Description: A three-month intensive course in general and specialised English for senior staff of the Czechoslovak State Bank
Contract: Regent school.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £65,000.

OTHER PROJECTS
Title: *Data Envelopment Analysis Programme*
Description: The London School of Economics ran a short computer programming course based at the Ecole Polytechnique de Brno. A computer has been installed at the Polytechnique to enable them to undertake further courses.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £10,000.

POLITICAL PROJECTS
Title: *Anglo-Czechoslovak Law Seminar*
Description: Four Czechoslovak lawyers attended a seminar in London organised by the Anglo-Czechoslovak Law Association.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £2,000.

Title: *Training for personnel of Czechoslovak TV*
Description: VISNEWS have arranged a short visit for personnel from Czechoslovak TV News to enable them to see how news coverage is approached in Britain and to look at United Kingdom equipment and production techniques.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £5,000.

Title: *Media Training for Czechoslovak Radio*
Description: A group of journalists from Czechoslovak Radio undertook a two day training session with an individual consultant looking at ways of improving presentation and content.
Status: Completed.
Cost: £200.

Title: *Legal Education*
Description: The Jan Hus Foundation is to advise Czechoslovak Universities on the reform of their system of legal education.
Status: Under way.
Cost: £5,000.

Title: *Broadcasting Training*

Description: The BBC World Service is to provide a six week course for Czechoslovak broadcasters on the methods and techniques of broadcasting and journalism in a plural society.

Status: To start February 1991.

Cost: £250,000.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HUNGARY AND POLAND

Title: *Assistance for Environmental NGOs*

Description: A programme of visits, exchanges and consultancy advice aimed at strengthening the network of environmental NGOs in all three countries.

Contract: Ecological Studies Institute.

Status: Under way.

Cost: £125,000 over two years.

ENERGY

Power Failures, East Midlands

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he next expects to meet the chair of the East Midlands Electricity Consumer Committee to discuss the blizzard of 8 December 1990 and the number of supply interruptions and the rate of reconnections;

(2) when he next expects to meet the chairman of the East Midlands Electricity Company to discuss the impact of the 8 December 1990 blizzard and the response thereto.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet either at present. My Department monitored the situation throughout the restoration of supplies. The East Midlands Electricity Consumer Committee has not requested a meeting.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) 12 December, *Official Report*, column *397*, he will set out the definition of civil spent nuclear fuel as used in the context of international nuclear safeguards to which he makes reference.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The expression "civil spent nuclear fuel" used in my answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) on 12 December 1990 at column *397* referred to irradiated fuel arising from the operation of reactors in the United Kingdom civil nuclear industry and irradiated fuel from overseas, stored in the United Kingdom before reprocessing.

Kuwaiti Oilfields

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been conducted by his Department or consultants to his Department on the effects of the mining or bombing of the Kuwaiti oilfields, in terms of *(a)* oil resource depletion, *(b)* the stability of crude oil prices and *(c)* environmental pollution, including effects on global warming.

Mr. Wakeham: My Department has not carried out any detailed studies on the possible effects of the mining or bombing of the Kuwaiti oilfields for oil resource depletion or the stability of crude oil prices. However, it seems unlikely that there would be any significant short term consequences for oil supplies, bearing in mind that crude from Kuwait is not at present available to world markets.

The Meteorological Office has conducted a preliminary study into the environmental effects. This concludes that even in the worst case scenario the effects on global warming would be almost negligible. Arrangements have been made for a copy of their note to be placed in the Library of the House.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the gross provision for the Welsh Development Agency in every year since 1979 and the provision intended for 1991-92; expressed at 1990-91 price levels.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Gross Mainstream Provision

(£ million)

	Cash	*1990-91 Prices*[1]
1979-80	35·1	76·0
1980-81	65·7	120·2
1981-82	54·4	90·8
1982-83	62·4	97·2
1983-84	61·9	92·2
1984-85	70·0	99·2
1985-86	63·5	85·4
1986-87	72·0	93·6
1987-88	98·6	121·5
1988-89	115·1	132·2
1989-90	133·4	144·1
1990-91	150·0	150·0
[2]1991-92	160·0	150·9

[1] Adjusted using latest GDP deflator.

[2] Planned budget provision.

In addition to the mainstream budgets shown above the Agency was provided with special resources to help mitigate the effects of the steel closures in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The resources involved are as follows:

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Cash	27·5	22·3	33·7	13·8	6·0
1990-91 prices[1]	59·6	40·8	56·3	21·5	8·9

[1] Adjusted using latest GDP deflator.

The Laurels, Bronllys

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the amount spent by Powys health authority on refitting The Laurels, Bronllys, as office accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: None. This is a matter for Powys health authority.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes an urgent review concerning the teaching of maths and the teaching of science, after the age of 14 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We intend to review the structure of the attainment targets for both maths and science for pupils of all ages in conjunction with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Educationa and Science.

School Subjects

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the introduction of a more feasible range of subjects for pupils after the age of 14 years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We intend to make a statement shortly.

Reading Standards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessments he has made in each of the years since 1980 of reading standards in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what policies he has followed to increase the standard of reading in local education authority schools in Wales;

(3) what action he has taken in each of the local education authorities in Wales to encourage improved standards in reading; if he will list the measurements and assessments he has made of reading standards in Wales in each of the years since 1980; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what initiatives he will take to improve reading standards in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given to him on 10 July 1990.

An assessment of reading standards is carried out as part of all Her Majesty's inspectors inspections of primary schools and, since 1983, I have arranged for all reports to be published. In addition to these reports, which recently have numbered around 40 per year, the assessment and performance unit (APU) published the results of their survey into language performance of pupils in 1981 and 1982. These assessments have been further supplemented throughout the period by Her Majesty's inspectorate (England and Wales) discussion and advisory papers in the "Curriculum Matters" series and "Aspects of Primary Education". Her Majesty's inspectorate Wales also published its own report "Aspects of Reading in English in the Junior Schools" in February 1989.

The teaching of English as a core foundation subject within the national curriculum was introduced into primary schools (pupils aged 5 to 7) from September 1989. Development of pupils' reading skills forms an essential element of the national curriculum programmes of study for English and sets out clear standards for achievement. As from this summer term, the individual achievement of all seven-year-old pupils will, for the first time, be assessed by law.

Since April 1989 the Welsh Office has grant funded the appointment of additional specialist English advisers with the WJEC and in each of the local education authorities to support classroom teachers to introduce the national curriculum requirements for English and also from September 1989, Welsh.

A summary of the latest Her Majesty's inspectorate Wales findings on reading standards is being made available to all directors of education and chairpersons of education committees in Wales. I have asked that high priority be given to the follow-up of all reports of schools with less than satisfactory performance as noted in Her Majesty's inspectorate inspections, the local education authorities own monitoring procedures or the national curriculum assessment arrangements. I have asked Her Majesty's inspectorate to continue to report to me regularly on reading standards.

Her Majesty's inspectorate is organising a conference in July which will be attended by headteachers of primary schools, senior staff, advisers, advisory teachers and teacher trainers. Reading will be featured as part of the conference.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the standard of reading at the age of seven years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The latest available evidence, based on a comprehensive programme of Her Majesty's inspectorate school inspections over the past 18 months, shows that the teaching of reading in about 83 per cent. of primary schools in Wales is good or satisfactory. I am still very concerned about the 17 per cent. that are not satisfactory. I am therefore, asking local education authorities to give high priority to following up reports on schools with less than satisfactory performance, and I will be receiving regular reports from Her Majesty's inspectorate on reading standards.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Lithuania

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will convene a meeting of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the use of force by the Soviet armed forces in Lithuania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We do not believe that raising this matter in the UN Security Council at this stage would contribute to a resolution of the present crisis. We can best help by working bilaterally and with our partners and allies to persuade the Soviet authorities to cease the use of force and return to negotiation with the elected authorities of Lithuania and the other Baltic states. We have raised the Baltic states in the current CSCE meetings at Vienna and Valletta, and are considering how best to pursue the matter further within the CSCE framework.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to impose economic sanctions and to withdraw technological aid to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics until the Soviet troops are withdrawn from Lithuania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) on 16 January. The EC has decided not to implement its economic assistance to the Soviet Union if the situation which prevails in Lithuania is prolonged in any way or extended to the other Baltic states.

Test Ban Treaty Conference

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom delegation to the partial test ban treaty amendment conference being held at the United Nations

in New York from 7 to 18 January; and if he will indicate the status of all civil servants and diplomats participant in the conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom delegation to the PTBTAC consists of the deputy head and one member of the United Kingdom delegation to the conference on disarmament in Geneva and two members of the United Kingdom mission to the United Nations in New York.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on developments to date at the partial test ban treaty amendment conference being held at the United Nations in New York from 7 to 18 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The partial test ban treaty amendment conference has been an opportunity for informed and responsible discussion of the issues surrounding nuclear testing. We hope that a consensus outcome will be possible.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals have been submitted by the United Kingdom delegation to the partial test ban treaty amendment conference being held at the United Nations in New York from 7 to 18 January.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom delegation has played a full part in the partial test ban treaty amendment conference general debate. No proposals have been submitted by the United Kingdom to the conference.

Advisory Companies

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what public relations, public affairs, advertising and marketing companies are retained to advise him; on what basis they are each appointed; what is the cost, tenure and purpose of their appointment in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office seeks the advice of a wide range of groups on presentational aspects of policy. Most advice given is on an informal and unpaid basis. Austin Knight Advertising UK Ltd., however, is retained by the Overseas Development Administration to advertise vacancies for overseas personnel. Their contract started on 1 June 1988 and expires on 31 March 1991. The contract was awarded following a competitive tendering exercise. The ODA does not pay a fee to Austin Knight but pays only for the advertising space.

EC Audiovisual Support Fund

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom will join the European support fund for the co-production and distribution of creative cinematographic and audiovisual works.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

The Government believe that it is for the film industry to decide which European initiatives best serve its interest. We are about to consult industry on the structure of the European co-production fund which was announced by the Government last year. Possible options include using part of this fund for a contribution to EURIMAGES.

PRIME MINISTER

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister if he raised with the Saudi Arabian Government during his recent visit the issue of British citizens missing since the tunnel disaster of 2 July 1990.

The Prime Minister: No. The British embassy in Riyadh remain closely in touch with the Saudi authorities who are continuing their investigations to try to trace the three British pilgrims still missing. We have provided finger prints of two of the pilgrims for comparison with those taken of victims before burial.

Departmental Budgets

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Prime Minister by how much the budget for the Department of Social Security will be decreased and the budget of the Department of the Environment will be increased for 1991-92 in respect of *(a)* hostels, *(b)* housing and community charge benefit subsidy and *(c)* care in the community.

The Prime Minister: For the 1991-92 financial year there will be no transfer of funds between the Department of Social Security and the Department of the Environment in respect of care in the community; but in drawing up the proposed local government financial settlement for England for that year full account was taken of some £16·35 million in respect of hostels. Similarly, the effect of the £86 million reduction in direct subsidy for housing benefit and community charge benefit in 1991-92 was fully taken into account in drawing up the proposed local government financial settlements for that year.

Nuclear Arms

Mr. Wray: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now reconsider Her Majesty's Government's refusal to commit the United Kingdom to negotiate a complete ban on nuclear tests and to accept annual mini-reviews on the progress of effective reduction of nuclear weapons, as proposed by Mexico and other non-aligned nations at the review conference on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in 1990.

The Prime Minister: We have made clear that we support a comprehensive test ban as a long-term goal to be reached on a step-by-step basis. Because our security will depend for the foreseeable future on deterrence based in part on the possession of nuclear weapons, we have a continuing need to test our nuclear weapons to ensure they remain effective and up-to-date. We believe that the conference on disarmament at Geneva provides the most appropriate forum for discussion of progress on nuclear testing issues.

European Community

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister what treaty amendments beyond those in the conclusions of the Rome European Councils are being considered by Her Majesty's Government for submission to the European Community.

The Prime Minister: The Government have already tabled draft treaty amendments on EMU. My right hon.

Friend the Foreign Secretary referred in his speech to the House on 6 December to a number of areas in which the Government would seek improvements in the treaties in the context of the inter-governmental conference on political union. All these are covered by the conclusions of the Rome European Councils.

Iraq

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what is the policy of the allies towards Iraq should the present regime be militarily defeated in the event of war.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in the debate on 15 January at column 814. I have nothing further to add.

Public Records Office

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the findings of the report on the future of the Public Records Office prepared by the civil service efficiency unit published in December 1990.

The Prime Minister: I understand that my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor has received the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the Public Record Office. The report has not yet been published. I understand that the Lord Chancellor intends to make a statement very shortly.

The Gulf

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list in full the military objectives of the allies if war occurs in the Gulf.

The Prime Minister: The Government's objectives since the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 have been and remain those of the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Advertising

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister whose responsibility it is to ensure that departmental Ministers observe Government conventions on the use of paid publicity and advertising; what process of scrutiny is currently in operation; and by what process departmental Ministers are held to account for the actions of their Departments in this regard.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* It is the responsibility of individual Ministers to ensure that the conventions on Government publicity and advertising are observed by their Department. Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the actions of their Departments.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

12. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he plans next to meet Ministers of the Government of the Republic of Ireland to discuss security in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: Security matters will be discussed at the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference. I expect this to take place shortly.

UDR Four

13. **Mr. Peter Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of his consideration of the case of Winston Allen, Noel Bell, James Hegan and Neill Latimer, known as the UDR Four.

Dr. Mawhinney: Last Thursday the hon. Gentleman presented my right hon. Friend with a dossier regarding these cases. It is being carefully examined.

Empty Council Housing

14. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the most recent figure for empty local authority housing for up to six months, 12 months and over one year, respectively; if he will list the local authorities concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised that at 30 November 1990 they had 1,955 unoccupied dwellings of which 1,176 had been unoccupied for up to six months; 292 had been unoccupied for between six and 12 months and 487 had been unoccupied for more than 12 months. Those figures exclude unoccupied properties which are not available for letting.

Anglo-Irish Conference

15. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the last meeting of the Anglo-Irish Conference.

Mr. Brooke: The last meeting of the conference took place on 30 November. Matters discussed included the prospects for political talks, security co-operation and economic and social topics. The joint statement issued after the conference was placed in the Library.

Housing Repossessions

16. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many writs were lodged before the courts for the repossession of houses in the latest year for which figures are available; how many repossessions occurred over that same period, together with comparable figures for 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Exact information is not available but it is believed that approximately 700 orders to repossess either domestic or commercial mortgaged properties were issued in 1990 compared with about 200 in 1982.

It should also be remembered that orders do not always lead to actual repossession, and therefore the total number of repossessions is not known.

Power Station Emissions

17. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent present energy policy in Northern Ireland is intended to enable European Community directives on emissions from power stations to be complied with.

Mr. Hanley: Existing power stations in Northern Ireland will be contributing to the United Kingdom programme, announced on 20 December 1990, for

achieving the cuts in emissions required by the Large Combustion Plants Directive. As for future power stations, they will have to comply with separate limits given in the directive.

Sunday Trading

18. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding Sunday trading.

Mr. Hanley: Apart from the hon. Member raising the matter in the House on 10 May, no representations have been received in recent years regarding Sunday trading in Northern Ireland.

Unemployment

19. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the latest figure for the level of unemployment in Northern Ireland; and what proposals he has to reduce that level.

Mr. Hanley: At 13 December 1990 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were 95,570 unemployed claimants in the Province. The Government's economic development strategy for Northern Ireland aims to improve the competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy and thereby bring about increased profitability and employment.

Government

20. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made in creating institutional and political structures of government in the Province which would command broad public support.

Mr. Brooke: I am continuing to seek agreement among the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland on a basis for talks which would address all key relationships to everyone's satisfaction.

Rheumatoid Arthritis

21. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he hopes to announce an appointment in the regional orthopaedic unit at Musgrave Park hospital of a specialist combining treatment of rheumatoid arthritis.

Mr. Hanley: It is the responsibility of the Eastern health and social services board to decide on the requirement for orthopaedic consultants at Musgrave Park hospital and for the Department of Health and Social Services to approve the appointment. No submission for approval to the appointment of a consultant combining treatment of rheumatoid arthritis has yet been received in the Department.

Colin Wallace

22. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his response to the most recent representations he has had from Colin Wallace.

Dr. Mawhinney: Mr. Wallace's most recent letter to my right hon. Friend was replied to on 16 August 1990.

Film Industry

23. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding there is for the film industry in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hanley: Support for the film industry in Northern Ireland is provided on the same basis as support to industry generally. In addition modest levels of financial assistance are provided by the Arts Council for Northern Ireland and through the business sponsorship incentive scheme administered by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts (ABSA) on behalf of the Department of Education.

Elderly People

24. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if any extra resources are being made available specifically for the elderly within the budget of the Eastern health and social services board.

Mr. Hanley: Health and social services boards in Northern Ireland will have resources of £830 million available to them in 1991-92, an increase of almost £84 million on the current year. Individual allocations will be announced shortly and it will be for the Eastern board to determine the distribution of resources across the various programmes of care, including the elderly.

Further Education

25. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when decisions will be made regarding further education in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The closing date for responses to the Government's consultative document, "Signposts for the 90s—A Review of Further Education", was 31 December 1990. The views received are being carefully considered and an announcement on the way forward will be made in the early summer.

Security

26. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest security situation.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the answer that I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown).

Tourist Board

27. **Mr. Mackay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the Northern Ireland tourist board.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Northern Ireland tourist board is being restructured and strengthened to enable it to implement the strategy for tourism introduced in 1989 for achieving sustained growth of tourism to and within Northern Ireland.

Irish Republic

28. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Brooke: I expect to discuss political matters, security co-operation and economic and social topics among others at the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference.

Nursery Education

29. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of three and four-year-olds have a full-time nursery place.

Dr. Mawhinney: Eight per cent.

Fallen Animals

6. **Rev. William McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the burial of fallen animals.

Mr. Hanley: I am aware of the problems associated with the disposal of fallen animals and I am very concerned about the particular difficulties arising from the cessation of collection services by the two major rendering plants. I have had useful discussions with one of the rendering plants who are considering providing a disposal service.

I will be meeting next week representatives of district councils in Northern Ireland led by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) to discuss the general question of disposal of fallen animals.

Government Appointees

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all Government-appointed nominees to the board of Laganside corporation since its formation, giving the year of appointment and the length of service in each case.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* The following members have been appointed by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland to serve on the board of Laganside Corporation since its inception on the 14 June 1989:

Member	*Period of Appointment*	*Length of Service*
The Duke of Abercorn (Chairman) Mr. J. B. McGuckian (Deputy Chairman) Mrs. M. Spence Mr. J. Carson, CBE Dr. B. Feeney Mr. J. Fitzpatrick Dr. R. B. Henderson, CBE	Since inception on 14 June 1989 to 13 June 1992	14 June 1989 to date
Mr. F. Cobain	1 August 1989 to 13 June 1992	1 August 1989 to date
Mr. D. Moreland, CBE	Since inception on 14 June 1989 to 13 June 1992	14 June 1989 until resignation on 31 March 1990
Mr. G. R. Irwin	1 May 1990 to 13 June 1992	1 May 1990 to date

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all Government-appointed nominees to the Northern Ireland Fire Authority since its formation, giving the year of appointment and the length of service in each case.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* The information is as follows:

Name	*Year of appoint-ment*	*Length of service*
Mr. F. Proctor	1973	14½ years
Mr. F. McGibbon	1973	4 years
Mr. J. Stewart	1973	16 years
Mr. T. R. Gildea	1973	4 years
Mr. C. J. Boomer	1977	5 years
Mr. W. H. Jeffrey	1977	4 years
Mr. W. T. Annon	1981	2 years
Mr. J. Burchill	1981	1 year
Mr. J. Foster	1982	3 years
Mr. A. C. Walker	1982	6 months
Mr. A. Cairns	1984	1 year
Mr. W. Morrison	1983	2 years
Mr. H. Smyth	1985	3 years
Mr. J. Parkes	1985	1½ year
Mrs. M. Clarke	1985	1½ year
Mr. H. Montgomery	1989	1 year
Mr. J. Walker	1989	1 year
Mr. A. E. S. Barr	1973	4 years
Mr. J. Higgins	1973	5 years
Mr. E. McVeigh	1973	8 years
Mr. N. R. Wilson	1973	1 year
Mr. A. C. McFarland	1975	15 years
Mr. A. N. Creswell	1979	2 years
Mr. S. R. Cameron	1977	1 year
Mr. I. Hunter	1979	10 years
Mr. J. Scott	1981	4 years
Mr. S. Semple	1981	8 years
Mr. T. P. Benson	1985	5 years
Mrs. J. Baird	1989	1 year
Mr. A. Kane	1989	1 year
Mr. A. Keery	1989	1 year
Mr. T. V. Clarke	1973	4 years
Mr. F. Guckian	1973	1½ years
Mr. R. Price	1973	4 years
Miss C. MacMahon	1973	12 years
Mr. J. Crosby	1973	4 years
Mr. J. J. Cole	1973	4 years
Mr. J. Woods	1973	4 years
Mr. D. Connolly	1973	17 years
Mr. B. Flannery	1975	10 years
Mrs. M. Craig	1977	13 years
Mr. F. Gilligan	1977	13 years

Name	Year of appoint-ment	Length of service
Mr. J. G. Grindle	1977	3 months
Mr. J. Hanna	1977	2½ years
Mr. P. McCartan	1981	8 months
Mr. J. A. Cathcart	1973	9½ years
Dr. F. Pinkerton	1977	4 years
Mrs. D. Gharbaoui	1978	3 years
Mrs. R. Forster	1981	8 months
Mr. J. E. Dowling	1982	3 years
Mr. P. Devlin	1981	5 months
Mr. J. Hall	1983	2½ years
Mr. R. W. Hamilton	1982	2 years
Mr. E. Haughey	1984	5 years
Mr. L. Hasson	1985	5 years
Mr. W. Keys	1985	5 years
Mr. L. Thompson	1985	5 years
Mr. K. Spence	1985	4 years
Mrs. E. McMichael	1989	1 year
Mrs. J. Neill	1989	1 year

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all Government-appointed nominees to each health and social services board since its formation, giving the year of appointment and the length of service in each case.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Year of appointment	Length of service to 1991
Eastern Board		
Mr. N. G. D. Ferguson	[1]1988	3 years
Mrs. B. M. McLaughlin	1988	3 years
Sir Edward Archdale	1989	2 years
Alderman J. S. D. Gilmore	[2]1989	2 years
J. Walker	[2]1989	2 years
A. Maginness	1989	2 years
S. I. G. Adamson	1989	2 years
T. M. Campbell	1989	2 years
Alderman F. R. Kane JP	[3]1989	2 years
J. J. Ritchie	1981	10 years
G. Morrison	1989	2 years
C. Braniff	1989	2 years
Dr. D. Burrows	1988	3 years
Dr. J. R. Hayes	1982	9 years
Dr. W. P. McMillin	1981	10 years
Dr. J. B. White	1988	3 years
Mrs. A. T. Colgan	1988	3 years
Mrs. A. R. Bagnall	1988	3 years
Mr. J. Black	1990	1 year
Mr. T. I. O'Rourke	1989	2 years
Professor A. H. G. Love	1981	10 years
Professor I. C. Benington	1989	2 years
Professor R. G. Shanks	1982	9 years
Mr. J. J. Eccles	1984	7 years
Mr. D. G. G. Moloney	1984	7 years
Mr. J. T. Poldermans	1984	7 years
Mrs. D. E. Field	1986	5 years
Mr. J. C. Morton	1982	9 years
R. Blaney	1986	5 years
Miss E. Irwin	1983	8 years
Northern Board		
Mr. R. J. Hanna *(Chairman)*	1989	2 years
Mr. B. M. Smyth	1984	7 years
Mr. R. Stinson	1988	3 years
Mr. W. Brownless	1989	2 years
Alderman R. McComb	1985	6 years
Mr. S. C. Dickson	1989	2 years
Mr. W. H. King	1979	12 years
Mr. R. J. K. Loughrin	1990	1 year
Mr. J. W. Fulton	1988	3 years
Mr. P. J. Sweeney	1989	2 years
Mr. M. O'Cleary	1985	6 years
Alderman Mrs. B. J. Gilliland	1989	2 years
Mr. R. P. Agarwala	1988	3 years
Dr. B. A. Sims	1983	8 years
Dr. B. G. Patterson	1986	5 years
Dr. R. E. Henderson	1983	8 years
Mrs. L. R. McCausland	1986	5 years
Mr. J. Currie	1980	11 years
Dr. J. G. Swanton	1986	5 years
Mr. M. E. H. Connolly	1982	9 years
Professor W. Thompson	1985	6 years
Mr. D. J. Clement	1987	4 years
Lady J. P. Brett	1984	7 years
Ms. M. E. Fiddis	1984	7 years
Mrs. E. F. Glover	1988	3 years
Mr. J. JD. McMullan	1984	7 years
Mr. J. R. McGuigan	1986	5 years
Southern Board		
Mr. J. D. Thompson	[4]1986	5 years
Mr. D. J. Ryan	1988	3 years
Mr. J. A. Doogan	1989	2 years
Mrs. J. Baird	1989	2 years
Alderman S. Cairns	[5]1989	2 years
Mr. S. McKavanagh	1989	2 years
Mr. K. Maginnis MP	1989	2 years
Mr. T. D. Kennedy	1985	6 years
Mr. J. V. McCart	[6]1985	6 years
Mr. W. J. H. Graham	1987	4 years
Dr. B. T. McNamee	1982	9 years
Dr. D. E. Dorman	1984	7 years
Dr. R. B. Flood	[7]1986	5 years
Miss R. A. Calvert	1984	7 years
Mrs. E. Steele	1982	9 years
Mr. W. S. Vaughan	1982	9 years
Mr. J. H. Fairleigh	1981	10 years
Professor R. W. Stout	1982	9 years
Mrs. E. McCabe	1988	3 years
Mrs. A. McNutt	1986	5 years
W. F. Gillespie	1990	1 year
P. Quinn	1990	1 year
Mr. T. Moore	1986	5 years
Mr. M. G. Toal	1986	5 years
Western Board		
Mr. R. G. Toland	[4]1984	7 years
A. C. V. Maltby	1982	9 years
Mr. D. F. McQuillan	1989	2 years
Mr. C. O. McClaughry	1985	6 years
Mr. R. Cartwright	1985	6 years
Mrs. A. Courtney	1985	6 years
Alderman J. R. Guy	1985	6 years
Mr. J. McNickle	1980	11 years
Mr. D. C. D. Anderson	1989	2 years
Mr. J. J. O'Kane	1983	8 years
Dr. J. G. McElroy	1989	2 years
B. St. J. McCartie	1986	5 years
Mr. P. T. Darcy	1990	1 year
Mrs. I. McGowan	1982	9 years
Mr. N. W. Bell	1986	5 years
Professor Jennifer R. P. Boore	1984	7 years
Mr. G. W. Odling-Smee	1982	9 years
Mr. W. S. Donaghey	1984	7 years
Mr. K. Cradden	1986	5 years
Mr. F. G. Hughes	1987	4 years
Mr. A. Reid	1988	3 years
Mrs. M. R. Cooper	1989	2 years

[1] Chairman from 1989.
[2] Previous service: 1985-87.
[3] Previous service: 1975-81 and 1985-87.
[4] Chairman from 1990.
[5] Previous service: 1977-88.
[6] Previous service: 1977-84.
[7] Previous service: 1972-81.

The details for board membership from 1972, when the present boards were established, can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

SCOTLAND

Homelessness

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of homeless persons in Scotland aged 16 and 17 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information held centrally does not enable such an estimate to be made. Information based on the number of applications received by local authorities under the homelessness legislation for all age groups was given in a reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart on 1 November 1990 at columns *714-15*.

Community Charge

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the number of civil penalties imposed in 1989-90 by each community charge registration officer in Scotland in respect of non-return of annual statutory poll tax forms;

(2) if he will list the numbers per thousand liable poll tax payers of civil penalties imposed in 1989-90 by each community charge registration officer in Scotland in respect of non-return of annual statutory inquiry forms.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many amendments were made during 1990 to each poll tax register in each registration area in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Electoral Rolls

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all parliamentary constituencies in Scotland which will have fewer electors registered in the electoral rolls coming into effect in February 1991 than the number of electors registered for 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information will not be available until the registers are completed in February. I shall write to the hon. Member in due course and place a copy of the information in the Library.

Wheelchair Access

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the capital sums spent by each local authority in Scotland on *(a)* improving access to public buildings by people in wheelchairs, *(b)* improving access to public roads and footpaths by lowering kerb heights and *(c)* improving access to specially adapted public toilets for use by people in wheelchairs for the most recent years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information in the form requested is not available centrally.

Housing

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce his approval of a grant by Scottish Homes for the LINK housing scheme at Melrose.

Mr. Lang: I have not yet received any application from Scottish Homes to approve payment of grant in respect of the proposed project by LINK housing.

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has required an environmental impact assessment of the proposed forestry plantation at Glen Dye, Grampian region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No. The woodland grant scheme application for Glen Dye was submitted to the Forestry Commission before the Environmental Assessment (Afforestation) Regulations 1988 came into force.

Population Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage change in the population of Scotland during *(a)* the 1970s and *(b)* the 1980s.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The published estimates show that the population of Scotland fell by 0·1 per cent. between 30 June 1969 and 30 June 1979, and by 2·2 per cent. between 30 June 1979 and 30 June 1989, the most recent date for which information is available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express the Scottish unemployment rate as a percentage of the United Kingdom unemployment rate for each year since 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: A comparison of Scottish and United Kingdom seasonally adjusted annual average unemployment rates in the period since 1979 is set out in the table. The latest position (December 1990) is such that Scotland's unemployment rate is closer to the United Kingdom average in absolute terms (1·5 percentage points) than it was at any time since January 1979.

Unemployment rates[1]

	Scotland	*United Kingdom*	*Scottish rate as a percentage of United Kingdom rate*
	per cent.	*per cent.*	
1979	5·7	4·0	142·5
1980	7·0	5·1	137·3
1981	9·9	8·1	122·2
1982	11·3	9·5	118·9
1983	12·3	10·5	117·1
1984	12·6	10·7	117·8
1985	12·9	10·9	118·3
1986	13·3	11·1	119·8
1987	13·0	10·0	130·0
1988	11·2	8·1	138·3
1989	9·3	6·3	147·6
[2]1990	8·0	5·8	137·9
[2]December	8·0	6·5	123·1

[1] Rates expressed as a percentage of the workforce.
[2] Provisional.

Private Landlords (Grants)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and value of housing authority grants made to private landlords under sections 24 to 26 of the Local Government Act 1988 for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90; and if he will provide a breakdown of the total cost of such grants to individual local authorities in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In 1989-90, Scottish local authorities applied for and received consent from my right hon. and learned Friend to make section 24 grants on four occasions, in each case to housing associations. The authorities concerned and the amounts were:

Local authority	*Amount* £
Shetland Islands council	24,000
Lochaber district council	7,000
North-East Fife district council	43,000
Perth and Kinross district council	25,000

No consents were applied for in 1988-89.

Pollution Control

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether grant aid is available under the farm and conservation grant scheme to cover the costs incurred as a result of reinforcement of the electricity supply due to the installation of new pollution control equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The provision or upgrading of electricity supply as such is not eligible for grant under the farm and conservation grant scheme, as the hon. Member will know from the reply to a similar question put by him to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 3 December.

There was, however, one exceptional instance some 12 months ago when the Scottish Office allowed grant on the installation of a discrete three-phase electricity supply to power farm waste handling equipment. In that case the provision of a new supply was cheaper and more efficient than the conversion of individual pumps (which are themselves eligible for grant), to run on the existing supply.

Glasgow City Technology Academy

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent from public funds on the proposed city technology academy in Glasgow.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* Information on the total expenditure incurred is not available and depends in part on negotiations between the GTA and its professional advisers.

HEALTH

The Gulf

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds have been earmarked for personnel suffering injuries in a possible war in the Gulf in the area health authorities for *(a)* Sunderland, *(b)* Durham and *(c)* Hartlepool; and what assessment has been made on the consequential effects upon local waiting lists.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if Wythenshawe and Withington hospitals, the Manchester Royal infirmary and Stockport infirmary are included in contingency plans for the treatment of air-lifted casualties to the United Kingdom in the event of international conflict in the Gulf; what effect this emergency use of hospitals will have on local patients; if extra resources are being or will be made available to the hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the current number of closed beds in national health service hospitals in the Greater London area; and how many are now available for casualties arising from a war with Iraq;

(2) if he will identify the national health service hospitals, number of wards and number of beds in Greater London earmarked for possible casualties in the event of a war with Iraq;

(3) how many beds currently closed in Newham health district have been earmarked for use by casualties in the event of war with Iraq; and who will pay for such beds being brought back into use in such circumstances.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has, by region, to ensure that the contingency plans for the national health service dealing with casualties of the Gulf crisis in the event of war have no adverse effect on existing waiting lists.

Mr. Dorrell: The reception of Gulf casualties will inevitably increase the emergency workload of the National Health Service. We are confident that the health authorities can deal adequately with the increased emergency workload, though some non-emergency admissions may need to be deferred. We do not expect this to be a long term affect and we hope to restore normal level of service as soon as possible.

Health authorities' plans for dealing with casualties from hostilities in the Gulf involve hospitals throughout the NHS. It is for health authorities to allocate cases to particular hospitals and information on which hospitals are being used is not available centrally.

As my right hon. Friend announced yesterday, we will provide extra money to meet the full costs of any Gulf casualties. We have told health authorities that they should spend what is necessary and we are giving guidance on how to account for and reclaim Gulf costs. This means that health authorities will be able to continue to use all the money in their normal allocations for their normal workload.

The Department does not routinely collect information on bed closures, as this is not a good indicator of levels of service in the NHS.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what extra resources will be made available to health authorities dealing with casualties of the Gulf crisis in the event of war.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional resources he is making available to the national health service in the event of war with Iraq.

Mr. Waldegrave: Health authorities will be given extra money to cover the full cost of treating any casualties from war in the Gulf. We are sending health authorities guidance on how to account for this.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, by region, the number of national health service beds to be made available in proposals to deal with casualties of the Gulf crisis in the event of war.

Mr. Dorrell: We would make available such beds as are needed. Our plans envisage that all 14 regions, and at regional discretion a number of hospitals within each region, should share in the treatment of casualties.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has received on the likely number of casualties to be handled by the national health service arising from a war with Iraq.

Mr. Dorrell: Casualty estimates are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private hospitals have *(a)* offered assistance and *(b)* been earmarked to receive casualties in the event of war with Iraq.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities will take whatever action they think appropriate, including using private hospitals, to ensure that any Gulf casualties can be treated quickly and effectively.

Dental Practitioners

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the impact on the public of the new contract for general dental practitioners.

Mr. Waldegrave: The new contract for general dental practitioners means better all-round care for patients, including preventive treatment, under national health service arrangements. Patients now also receive more information about their dental care and the choices open to them. Forty-one per cent. of the population are exempt from dental changes. At present, those patients who are not exempt are charged a fixed proportion (75 per cent.) of the fee paid to the dentist for the treatment given. I have no plans to increase the proportional charge in the foreseeable future.

Food Safety

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the terms of reference of the advisory committee and steering group on the microbiological safety of food.

Mr. Dorrell: The terms of reference of the advisory committee are:

"To assess the risk to humans of micro-organisms which are used or occur in or on food and to advise Ministers on the exercise of powers in the Food Safety Act 1990 relating to the microbiological safety of food."

The terms of reference of the steering group are:

"To identify through surveillance the need for action to ensure the microbiological safety of food."

General Practitioners (Additional Payments)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration he has given to using enumeration districts instead of wards when calculating the Jarman 8 index of deprivation to calculate additional payments to general practitioners in areas of deprivation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Using enumeration districts instead of wards as the basis for calculating these payments has been suggested to us by general practitioners and others, but it would raise practical problems, for example of sample size, that would require careful consideration. Such a change would be made only if we could be satisfied that it would achieve better targeting of resources.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the use of the Jarman 8 index of deprivation when calculating additional payments to general practitioners in areas of deprivation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a number of letters on the use of the Jarman index from general practitioners, hon. Members and various interested groups. Although the representations welcome the introduction of deprivation payments they make a number of comments and criticisms which we are studying carefully.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his current estimate of people in the London borough of Newham waiting for hospital treatment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is provided in the following table:

	March 1989	*March 1990*	*Decrease*	
			Number	*Per cent.*
Total number of list	1,122	871	251	−22
Number waiting over one year	345	136	209	−60

Note: Excludes self-deferred cases.

Coronary Heart Disease

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the health districts in England and Wales with standardised death rates from coronary heart disease more than 30 per cent. higher than the national average for women;

(2) if he will list the health districts in England and Wales with standardised death rates from coronary heart disease more than 25 per cent. higher than the national average for men.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The figures are as follows:

Coronary heart disease standardised mortality rate (all ages)

District health authority	*SMR*
Males	
North Manchester	137
Dewsbury	136
Wigan	133
Bradford	130
South West Durham	130
Sunderland	130
Scunthorpe	129
Burnley/Pendle	128
Bury	127
Hartlepool	127
Durham	126
Oldham	126
Barnsley	126

District health authority	SMR
Females	
Sunderland	147
Barnsley	145
South West Durham	143
South Tees	141
Wigan	140
Dewsbury	140
Hartlepool	137
West Lancashire	136
Bradford	134
Durham	134
Oldham	133
North West Durham	133
Burnley/Pendle	133
Rochdale	132
Warrington	131
Pontefract	131
Bury	131

Source:
Public Health Common Data Set 1990 (Based on data for years 1985-1989).

Surgery Buildings

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether, under the cost rent scheme, value added tax on the cost of a site, required under the new EEC regulation to be paid on the cost of the site on completion of a surgery building, even when value added tax was not payable when the site was actually purchased before the operation of the EEC regulation, will be calculated as included in the total cost to be covered by the scheme, as if the new regulation had been in force when the land was actually purchased before commencement of the building.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. We plan to amend the statement of fees and allowances payable to general medical practitioners to allow any VAT liability on site costs to be fully taken into account in assessing the total cost to be covered by the cost rent scheme.

HIV (Diets)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what communications his Department has received from Anita McDonald concerning the interpretation of her research relating to the cost of diets for people with AIDS or HIV infection; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received no such communications.

Deprivation Index

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the impact of altering the banding arrangements to include wards with Jarman scores of 10 or over.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of wards (1981 boundaries) which have a Jarman score of 10 or more in England is 1,954. If deprivation payments were to be made at the level (10 or more) the cost would have to be met by reducing other fees and allowances within the remuneration system to ensure that the average net income incurred by general practitioners did not exceed the level recommended by the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body and accepted by the Government. If the payment rate for the band 30-39 was extended down to 10, some £60 million at January 1991 rates would have to be found by reducing other fees and allowance.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Crisis Loans

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been awarded crisis loans due to a period of compulsory unpaid holidays under paragraph 4161 of the social fund manual *(a)* in 1988-89 and *(b)* 1989-90 by (i) amount paid and (ii) length of time awarded.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to what level the limit above which occupational pension is deducted from unemployment benefit would have to be raised in order to restore its April 1981 value as a proportion of average earnings; and whether he will increase it accordingly.

Mr. Jack: Against a background in which occupational pensions have been rising, we have no plans to increase the limit; but had it been raised in line with earnings increases since 1981, it would now be £76 at an annual cost of £14 million.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the percentage fall over the period since the end of April 1987 in the real value of the incomes of persons then receiving supplementary benefit and now receiving income support with transitional protection, assuming that they have no disregarded income.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him on 20 November at column *108*.

Disabled People (Extra Costs)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will specify the table in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys reports which supports the statements of Ministers in Standing Committee E that the average extra costs of people who are not independently mobile are less than half of the average extra costs of those who are unable or virtually unable to walk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information is not contained in the tables published in the OPCS reports but is derived from a detailed analysis of the survey data. That analysis indicates that those people already in receipt of mobility allowance had extra costs, on average, of some £13 per week; the group of people who are not independently mobile, whom we expect to receive the new lower rate mobility component, had extra costs, on average, of £6 per week.

Family Credit

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families employed in farming have been receiving family credit for each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Separate information about people employed in farming is not available. The total number of people in "farming, fisheries and related occupations", which would include all categories of farming, is as follows:

At 30 April	*Number*
1989	10,320
1990	11,240

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether employees who pay national insurance are eligible for unemployment benefit during compulsory unpaid holidays.

Mr. Jack: Under regulation 7 (1)(h) of the Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit Regulations 1983, unemployment benefit cannot be paid while an employee is on a holiday which is recognised or customary in his employment. The only exceptions are

1. where the employee has been laid off work for an indefinite period which started more than a week before the holiday, or
2. where the employee has used up his whole year's holiday entitlement between the previous 1 March and the date of the holiday.

It is for the independent adjudicating authorities to decide whether a particular holiday is recognised or customary.

Children (Benefits)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the percentage increase will be in April in the combined value of child dependency increase and child benefit payable to a widow or invalidity pensioner for the first child and each subsequent child in the family.

Mr. Jack: The total amount payable to a widow or invalidity pensioner by way of child benefit and child dependency increase will be increased by 6·2 per cent. from £16·90 to £17·95 per child from April.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the combined value of child dependency increase and child benefit for the child of a widow or invalidity pensioner at current and April 1991 prices and as a percentage of average earnings, in November 1979 and at each subsequent uprating date; and what was the reason for any fall in real value since November 1979.

Mr. Jack: The values of child dependency increase and child benefit for the child of a widow or invalidity pensioner at current and April 1990 prices (the latest April figure available) and as percentage of average earnings are shown in the table.

Column 1 UR date	*Column 2 Value of CHB + CDI*	*Column 3 ARV at April 1990 prices over the period*	*Column 4 RV at April 1990 prices at UR date*	*Column 5 Value as a percentage of AGWE*
	£	£	£	£
November 1979	11·10	21·31	23·05	9·7
November 1980	12·25	20·91	22·06	9·1
November 1981	12·95	20·15	20·82	8·7
November 1982	13·80	20·50	20·88	8·6
November 1983	14·10	19·94	20·35	8·2
November 1984	14·50	19·36	19·94	7·7
November 1985	15·05	19·44	19·63	7·5
July 1986	15·15	19·12	19·44	7·2
April 1987	15·30	18·64	18·80	6·8
April 1988	15·65	17·99	18·50	6·4
April 1989	16·20	17·27	17·73	6·0
April 1990	16·90	—	16·90	5·7

Abbreviations:
UR = Uprating.
CHB = Child benefit.
CDI = Child dependency increase.
ARV = Average real value.
RV = Real value.
AGWE = Average gross weekly earnings.

Notes:
Column 1: Uprating dates refer to the child dependency increases. For all but the first date they are also the uprating dates for child benefit.
Column 2: The rate of child benefit plus child dependency increase is the same for a widow or an invalidity pensioner.
Column 3: The average real value (using the general index of retail prices) of the amounts in column 2 over the period between the urprating dates in column 1.
Column 4: The real value at April 1990 prices (using the general index of retail prices) of the amounts in column 2 at date of uprating in column 1.
Column 5: The value of the amount in column 2 as a percentage of average gross weekly earnings. The source of the earnings is the new earnings survey and the estimates used up to November 1982 are those for adults aged over 21 in full-time employment whose earnings are unaffected by absence. From November 1983 the source remains the new earnings survey but in respect of all full-time workers on adult rates of pay whose earnings are unaffected by absence.

The differential between the present combined weekly rate of child benefit and child dependency increase and that payable in 1979 expressed in terms of April 1990 prices has been caused by the method by which child dependency increases are uprated. Both the child benefit legislation and that governing the uprating of benefits provide for the rate of child benefit to be taken into account when determining the levels of child dependency increases of benefits. The method of doing this is to

calculate what the child dependency increase would be if the general uprating percentage were applied, and then to deduct any cash increase in child benefit.

Child Poverty

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie), of 20 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *318*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* his response to the National Children's Bureau concerning its report into child poverty conducted by Professor Jonathan Bradshaw for publication by UNICEF.

Mr. Jack: The response of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is as follows:

Thank you for your letter of 7 December enclosing a copy of the report on "Child Poverty and Deprivation in the UK". The Prime Minister has also asked me to thank you for your letter to him dated 11 December. I would like to comment on some aspects of the report which fall within the remit of my Department.

I read the report with considerable interest, and can assure you that the Government fully agrees with the conclusion that "a key determinant of children's lives is the state of the economy." That is why we have pursued policies aimed at creating a competitive and thriving economy—because we believe that is the best way of helping all the people of this country.

I was also pleased to see that the author recognises the danger of attempting to define a "poverty line", with poor people on one side and people who are not poor on the other. As you know, we have often drawn attention to the fact that no Government in this country—irrespective of political persuasion—has ever accepted that a single "poverty line" can be drawn.

As the author of your report demonstrates, a line fixed at, or around, the benefit level has the paradoxical effect of increasing the number of "poor" people whenever the benefits are increased. I was therefore rather surprised to see him dismiss one "poverty line" on grounds of "intuition" in favour of another equally arbitrary one at 110 per cent. of the supplementary benefit level.

I think the report is rather disingenuous in stating that "only" 45 per cent. of the increase in numbers with incomes below this level are accounted for by real increases in benefit levels. Looked at another way, the report is confirming precisely what we have always argued—that a very substantial proportion (nearly half) of the increase in numbers is attributable to real increases.

I would not dispute that unemployment also played a part in increasing the numbers receiving benefit—but unemployment has virtually halved since the period in question; and the Government has responded to another factor which has also undoubtedly come into play—namely, the growth in lone parenthood, to which we have responded by developing a comprehensive strategy including proposals for enforcement and collection of child maintenance, benefit improvements for lone parents, and better work incentives.

I was also disappointed to notice that the report, in commenting on the growth in numbers of children living in households with incomes below the average, or below half average, has ignored the very significant growth in average income itself. Any statement about the numbers living on incomes below a proportion of the average is simply incomplete without any reference to the overall growth in the average—which rose by some 23 per cent. between 1979 and 1987. Indeed, a careful examination of tables B3 of Households Below Average Income will demonstrate that between 1979 and 1987 the proportion of children below half average income (1979 level expressed in real terms) actually fell.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Anti-dumping Measures

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many items or products are subject to EC anti-dumping duties, import quotas, secret or otherwise, or price maintenance agreements, including those concluded as a result of anti-dumping investigations; and if he will list the products and items concerned, together with an estimate of the effect on the price of these products.

Mr. Sainsbury: At 31 December 1990 definitive anti-dumping remedies were in force on a total of 56 products imported into the European Community from certain exporting countries. A further 5 products are currently subject to provisional anti-dumping duties imposed by the Commission pending a definitive decision by the Council of Ministers. I have placed in the Library of the House a list of all remedies in force on 31 December. This shows not only duties but undertakings given by exporters to observe minimum price levels.

All products requiring an individual licence for import into the United Kingdom are listed in the open general import licence of 4 December 1987, as amended, which is published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. The great majority of products subject to quantitative restrictions are textile and clothing products covered by the Multi-Fibre Arrangement. In addition the United Kingdom maintains quotas on bananas from the dollar area and on a variety of products from the remaining state trading countries. I have placed in the Library of the House notice to importers No. 2291 of 3 January which sets out the 1991 quota levels for restricted textiles and Notice to Importers No. 2293 of the same date which gives the provisional 1991 arrangements for the state trading area.

In addition a number of products are subject under Community regulations to surveillance licensing. This does not amount to a quantitative restriction but can allow voluntary restraint arrangements negotiated or accepted by the Commission to be monitored. Such arrangements cover certain textile and clothing products imported from Egypt, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey, most types of footwear from Korea and Taiwan and certain iron and steel products from (in 1990) Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Brazil. (This in addition to the United Kingdom quota on iron and steel products from the USSR). Iron and steel products from all sources are subject to surveillance licensing so that a check can be made on the prices at which the products are traded.

There are no official restrictions on the import of motor vehicles but an inter-industry voluntary restraint arrangement limits the share of the United Kingdom market taken by exports from Japan.

Anti-dumping remedies are designed to raise the price of dumped products by an amount which reflects either the dumping margin or the margin of injury suffered by EC industry whichever is the lower. The rates of anti-dumping duty applied to each product at the point of import are contained in the list I have placed in the Library. Whether the full effect is felt at retail level will depend on the extent to which margins are adjusted after the point of import.

The exact effect of quota restrictions is very difficult to estimate but those set at levels that effectively restrict trade can be expected to raise prices to the consumer. A number of academic studies have attempted to estimate the price effects in the main sectors. Professor Silberston of Imperial College for instance estimated in 1989 that the ending of the multi-fibre arrangement would lead to a fall of 8 per cent. in average import prices of clothing. In a 1988 study of the cars VRA Professor Alistair Smith of Sussex university estimated that it raised the price of Japanese cars in the United Kingdom by 7·5 per cent. There are no studies covering the whole of the United Kingdom's current restrictions. Estimates are particularly difficult to make where the situation can change from year to year or even more rapidly and earlier studies relating to eastern Europe are now out of date.

Ford Vehicles (Export)

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has been notified of any significant increase in motor vehicle exports from the Dagenham plant of the Ford Motor Company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I was personally notified by the chairman and chief executive of Ford at the start of the export programme from Dagenham. I have written congratulating both management and work force at Dagenham on their behalf.

Racing

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has any plans to investigate the allegations of price rigging and fixing of odds on racecourses and greyhound tracks.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 14 January 1991 at col. *353*.

Recycling

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer on 26 November, *Official Report*, columns 276-77, on the importance his Department places on providing outlets for recycled materials in order to achieve the Government's recycling targets, what is his Department's advice to those companies developing markets for refined refuse derived fuels; how they will be helped by current derogation arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My Department's advice to all manufacturers of refuse-derived fuel (rdf) would be to work closely with potential users to ensure that the product meets their requirements on, amongst other things, calorific value and burn and emission characteristics. I understand that those companies engaged in developing rdf are already doing this to a large extent, but my department has available two schemes of financial assistance (ETIS, the environmental technology innovation scheme—and DEMOS, DTI's environmental management options scheme) which may be used to aid that process.

The matter of derogation arrangements is one for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

DAF/Leyland

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about the numbers of jobs shed by DAF/Leyland in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Holland.

Mr. Leigh: Leyland DAF's total employment in the United Kingdom fell from 6,997 at the end of 1989 to 6,471 at the end of 1990. Of this 526 net reduction, 120 jobs were not lost but transferred out of Leyland DAF with the sale of part of the company's business to VDL group. I have no information on the company's employment figures in the Netherlands.

Exports to Brazil

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will extend Export Credits Guarantee Department cover to British machine manufacturers exporting to Brazil;

(2) if he will take steps to enable British knitting machine manufacturers to offer extended credit terms of up to five years, with low rates of interest on supplies of such machines to Brazil.

Mr. Sainsbury: ECGD cover for export contracts in Brazil on credit terms of up to five years is currently suspended. Brazil is in arrears on debts which have already been rescheduled. These arrears must be settled and an IMF economic programme implemented before ECGD can consider restoring extended credit arrangements.

If and when ECGD is able to resume medium cover, finance will be made available by United Kingdom banks at interest rates permitted under the OECD consensus arrangements.

Terrorism (Insurance)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to issue guidelines to insurance companies about damage resulting from Iraqi terrorist acts in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redwood: The Association of British Insurers has issued a statement on this matter. Their guidelines deal with the impact of possible Iraqi terrorist action on existing policies. I am arranging for a copy of the ABI's statement to be placed in the Library.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Land Sales

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what process of consultation with land users is followed when church land is sold for development.

Mr. Alison: The consultation procedure depends on the category of Church land to be sold. In the case of glebe land, the relevant diocesan board of finance is the owner and, under the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976, they are legally required to notify the incumbent (or, if the living is vacant, the churchwardens) who may make representations to the Commissioners. It would also be usual for the board to consult tenants, though they are not required by the measure to do so.

The local planning authority will follow its own consultation procedures in relation to any application for planning permission.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much land has been sold by the Lincoln Diocese Board in each of the latest three available years; and how much was raised by the sales.

Mr. Alison: Details of glebe sales in Lincoln diocese for 1988-90 are:

	Acres	*Proceeds (£)*
1988	429	794,874
1989	558	1,349,604
1990	433	1,641,834

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much land has been sold by the Church Commissioners in each of the three latest available years; how much was raised in each of the three years by sales; and how much was reinvested in land.

Mr. Alison: Sales and purchases of agricultural land for 1987-89 are shown in the following table. They reflect the Commissioners' stated policy of releasing capital for reinvestment in other sectors, through sales of vacant farms as opportunities arise.

	Acres sold	*Net sale proceeds £ million*	*Acres purchased*	*Net cost of purchases £*
1987	835	4·2	Nil	Nil
1988	3,121	11·9	65	147,000
1989	4,791	16·1	14	9,000

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what representations the Church Commissioners have received from residents and allotment holders about the sale of church land on the Boulthness Glebe in Lincoln; and what action they propose to take to meet representatives of the allotment holders and local councillors to discuss the sale.

Mr. Alison: I believe that the property that the hon. Member has in mind is at Boultham. The Commissioners have not received any representations about the sale of church land there and have no plans to meet allotment holders or local councillors.

I understand, however, that the Lincoln diocesan board of finance has submitted a planning application for residential development of part of the glebe land and the creation of a wildlife habitat on the remainder. The board will forward any consequent sale proposals to the Commissioners, whose consent is required under the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 18 January 1991

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Footballers (Illegal Payments)

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) when he expects to meet representatives of the Football League in order to discuss the need to ensure consistency of treatment of clubs who make illegal payments to their players; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has concerning the policy of the Football League towards the determination of penalties relating to illegal payments to players; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I condemn attempts by any club to gain unfair advantage over others. However, the question of the appropriate action to take when breaches of Football League regulations occur is for the football authorities which I understand consider all such cases on their merits. I have no plans to meet the League to discuss this matter.

Last year my hon. Friend the previous Minister for Sport received a substantial number of representations, mainly from Swindon Town FC supporters, concerning the penalty imposed by the League on the club for making illegal payments to players.

Higher Education

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of young people in the northern region entered higher education year by year since 1985.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The table shows, for school leavers in the north of England and for England as a whole, the percentage whose intended destination was either degree or teacher training courses.

Percentage of leavers going to degree or teacher training courses

Academic year	*North of England*	*All England*
1984-85	7·2	7·8
1985-86	7·1	7·8
1986-87	7·2	7·7
1987-88	7·9	9·1
1988-89	9·5	10·2

Primary School Teachers

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what initiatives he is taking to reduce the shortage of teachers in primary schools in Leicestershire.

Mr. Fallon: Leicestershire local education authority is to receive grant support for £150,000 of expenditure on teacher recruitment in 1991-92. This is part of an overall allocation of £7·7 million between 86 LEAs, the average grant support being £90,000. A similar sum will be available in 1992-93. In addition, Leicestershire LEA will benefit from £80,000 allocated to support a licensed teacher scheme. This funding reflects the Department's commitment to assist authorities in the development of initiatives to improve teacher recruitment.

Computers (Security)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures he is taking to ensure the security of *(a)* his Department's computers in-house and *(b)* lap-top personal computers when used by civil servants outside his Department's offices.

Mr. Eggar: It is not Government policy to disclose details of the protective security measures for safeguarding computers used for official purposes. To do so would be of assistance to potential attackers and therefore reduce the effectiveness of the measures. These measures are kept under review.

Dyslexic Pupils

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special arrangements he has now made for the marking of GCSE exam papers where the pupil has dyslexia; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The GCSE examining group have a well-established common policy, drawn up in consultation with various national organisations, to deal with handicapped candidates, including those who are recognised as dyslexic. There are also appeals procedures available for those candidates who feel that such special circumstances have not been taken into account in the marking of their examinations. No changes to this provision have been proposed.

Expenditure

Mr. Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, following the statement by his predecessor, the hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) how much extra capital moneys have been allocated for educational purposes in 1990-91; and what proportion of these have been allocated to *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Fallon: With the exception of universities, the Department's expenditure programme does not cover education capital expenditure in Wales.

Provision in the DES programme for capital expenditure on schools, colleges and PCFC institutions in England in 1990-91 was some £109 million higher than in 1989-90. Details are set out in the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1011).

Examination Results

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all local education authorities in England in rank order showing the proportions of school-leavers with five or more GCSE results at grades A to C.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list all local education authorities in England in rank order showing the proportions of school leavers with five or more GCSE results at grades A to C.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is set out in the table.

LEA	*Rank*	*Proportion of leavers with 5 or more GCSE results at Grades A-C as percentage of all school leavers*[1]
Sutton	1	39·1
Barnet	2	38·9
Harrow	3	38·6
Surrey	4	38·0
Buckinghamshire	5	36·0
West Sussex	6	35·5
North Yorkshire	7	34·5
Richmond	8	32·4
Berkshire	9	32·3
Kingston upon Thames	10	32·2
Hertfordshire	11	31·9
Solihull	12	31·7
East Sussex	13	31·4
Gloucestershire	14	31·2
Trafford	15	30·7
Northumberland	15	30·7
Shropshire	17	30·3
Wigan	18	30·2
Bromley	19	29·9
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	19	29·9
Hampshire	21	29·6
Hereford and Worcester	22	29·2
Cheshire	23	29·1
Bolton	24	28·7
Stockport	25	28·6
Bexley	26	28·5
Sefton	26	28·5
Warwickshire	26	28·5
Cambridgeshire	29	28·0
Cumbria	29	28·0
Wirral	31	27·8
Avon	31	27·8
Bury	33	27·7
Oxfordshire	33	27·7
Dorset	35	27·6
North Tyneside	36	27·5
Essex	37	27·4
Kent	38	27·3
Tameside	39	27·1
Somerset	39	27·1
Enfield	41	26·9
Lancashire	42	26·8
Cleveland	43	26·5
Devon	44	26·3
Wiltshire	45	25·9
Kirklees	46	25·6
Redbridge	47	25·5
Dudley	47	25·5
Hounslow	49	25·2
Lincolnshire	49	25·2
Leicestershire	51	25·1
Bedfordshire	52	24·9
Staffordshire	52	24·9
Merton	54	24·6
Derbyshire	54	24·6
Norfolk	56	24·5
Havering	57	24·4
Suffolk	58	24·2
Walsall	59	23·4
Durham	59	23·4
Nottinghamshire	59	23·4
Salford	62	23·2
Rotherham	63	23·0
Northamptonshire	64	22·8
Hillingdon	65	22·7
Humberside	66	22·6
Ealing	67	22·5
Sheffield	68	22·2
South Tyneside	68	22·2
Croydon	70	22·1
Leeds	71	22·0
Sunderland	72	21·8
Doncaster	73	21·7
Newcastle upon Tyne	74	21·6
Calderdale	75	21·5
Coventry	76	21·2
Rochdale	77	20·9
Brent	78	20·6
St. Helens	79	20·5
Gateshead	80	20·4
Wolverhampton	81	19·9
Barnsley	82	19·7
Isle of Wight	83	19·5
Liverpool	84	19·4
Birmingham	85	19·1
Oldham	86	18·1
Wakefield	87	17·5
Bradford	88	16·9
Haringey	89	16·6
Manchester	90	16·4
Inner London	91	15·9
Sandwell	92	15·5
Newham	93	14·9
Waltham Forest	94	12·7
Barking and Dagenham	95	11·3
Knowsley	96	8·5
TOTAL ENGLAND		25·8

[1] The examination data are aggregated from the results of a sample survey for the academic years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89. These figures are based on a 10 per cent. sample of school leavers in maintained schools (excluding special schools). The percentages do not reflect exam achievements of pupils after leaving school. It includes GCSE and O-level grades A to C and CSE grade 1.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities in England which achieved average or better examination results for school leavers on the basis of the latest information available and are budgeting to spend no more than 5 per cent. above the education component of their 1990-91 standard spending assessment.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local authorities in England which achieved average or better examination results for school leavers on the basis of the latest information available and which are budgeting to spend no more than 5 per cent. above the education component of their 1990-91 standard spending assessment.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is set out in the table:

Local education authority	*1986-87 to 1988-89 Numbers of leavers with 5 or more GCSE results at Grades A-C as percentage of all school leavers*	*Indexed budgeted overspend on education element of 1990-91 SSA (100 = Parity)*
Barnet	38·9	99
Harrow	38·6	102
Surrey	38·0	103
Buckinghamshire	36·0	103
West Sussex	35·5	100
Berkshire	32·3	98
East Sussex	31·4	105
Trafford	30·7	102
Bromley	29·9	100
Cornwall	29·9	98
Hampshire	29·6	101
Hereford and Worcester	29·2	100
Bolton	28·7	101
Bexley	28·5	100
Sefton	28·5	104
Cambridgeshire	28·0	104
Wirral	27·8	101
Essex	27·4	102
Kent	27·3	95
Tameside	27·1	100
Enfield	26·9	104

Note: Information is not available for the individual inner London boroughs, the City of London, Brent, Haringey or Barnsley.

The information is based on:

Examination data aggrevated from the results of a sample survey over the three academic years from 1986-87 to 1988-89 showing the proportions of school leavers with 5 or more GCSE results at grades A-C;

Education budget data based on budget returns from LEAs to the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities in England which achieved below-average examination results for school-leavers in the latest year for which information is available and are budgeting to spend more than 7·5 per cent. above the education component of their 1990-91 standard spending assessment.

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list those local education authorities in England which achieved below-average examination results for school leavers in the latest year for which information is available and which are budgeting to spend more than 7·5 per cent. above the education component of their 1990-91 standard spending assessment.

Mr. Fallon: The information requested is set out in the table:

LEA	*1986-87 to 1988-89 Numbers of leavers with 5 or more GCSE A-C as percentage of all School Leavers*	*Indexed budgeted overspend on education element of 1990-91 SSA (100 = Parity)*
Hounslow	25·2	110
Leicestershire	25·1	110
Merton	24·6	109
Derbyshire	24·6	124
Havering	24·4	109
Suffolk	24·2	109
Walsall	23·4	112
Durham	23·4	110
Salford	23·2	113
Rotherham	23·0	112
Hillingdon	22·7	111
Sheffield	22·2	117
South Tyneside	22·2	113
Leeds	22·0	109
Doncaster	21·7	108
Newcastle upon Tyne	21·6	115
Calderdale	21·5	110
Coventry	21·2	110
St. Helens	20·5	112
Gateshead	20·4	117
Wakefield	17·5	117
Sandwell	15·5	112
Barking and Dagenham	11·3	114

Information is not available for the individual inner London boroughs, the City of London, Brent, Haringey or Barnsley.

The information is based on:

examination data aggregated from the results of a simple survey over the three academic years from 1986-87 to 1988-89 showing the proportions of school leavers with 5 or more GCSE results at grades A-C;

Education budgets data based on budget returns from LEAs to the Department of the Environment.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

House of Commons Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, why the cleaners in the House of Commons itself and other associated buildings were requested to work on Monday 24 December.

Mr. Beith: For a number of staff of the House, Christmas eve was a normal non-sitting working day, although only a proportion of the House's directly employed cleaning staff was required for work that day.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing his estimates of how much will be saved in community charge benefit subsidy in 1990-91 for each local authority which is a housing benefit authority as a result of charge-capping.

Miss Widdecombe: All authorities have until 30 September 1991 to submit claims to community charge benefit subsidy in respect of 1990-91. These claims will reflect community charge benefit expenditure incurred after the application of budget substitution, but it will not be possible reliably to estimate what the level of that expenditure would otherwise have been.

Income Support

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the deductions that may be made from income support benefit before a claimant receives it.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 26 November at cols. *306-08*.

Pensioners' Christmas Bonus

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate his Department has made of the potential cost of a 1991 Christmas bonus for pensioners at *(a)* £10·00 per pensioner, *(b)* £15·00 per pensioner and *(c)* £20·00 per pensioner.

Miss Widdecombe: The estimated cost of paying the pensioners' Christmas bonus in 1991-92 is approximately £114 million. If the payment was increased to £15 per pensioner, the cost would be about £171 million; if the payment was increased to £20 per pensioner, the cost would be £228 million.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings his Department would make were no notice given of oral questions to Ministers and they were answered without civil service time being used on briefings.

Miss Widdecombe: No savings would be made and costs could increase because officials would have to brief Ministers on the whole range of subjects which could possibly arise.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time taken and the average cost involved of officials' time in his Department preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions.

Miss Widdecombe: The time taken to prepare ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions is not routinely recorded in this Department, although estimates would be made if the disproportionate cost threshold, currently £250, were likely to be exceeded for an individual question. However, the current estimate of the average cost throughout all Departments of answering an oral question if £99, on the basis set out in the reply of my right hon. Friend the Lord President to the hon. Member on 19 December 1990 at column *163*.

Disability Working Allowance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide illustrative examples of people who would be *(a)* better off and *(b)* worse off claiming the disability working allowance compared with their current situation.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* Some illustrative examples of the level of income that disability working allowance (DWA) recipients will have were included in the note published on 12 November, a copy of which is in the Library. All recipients who claim more than eight weeks after starting work will be better off than if they did not have DWA. Most other potential recipients earning more than about £30 a week will be better off with DWA than they would be if they remained on an incapacity benefit.

A small number of people in the circumstances listed might be worse off if they decided to take a job at a very low rate of pay. However, no one will be obliged to claim DWA and, if they choose to take a job and claim DWA, all of them will be better off than if DWA were not available to supplement their earnings.

The level of earnings below which people in the categories listed would be worse off would depend on the incapacity benefit to which they would be entitled if they were not working, the size and composition of their family and, in the case of *(a)*, on the size of the claimant's mortgage.

The circumstances in which a small number of people might be worse off if they decided to take a job at a very low rate of pay supported by DWA include the following:

a. if the claimant has a mortgage (but we expect about 10,000 DWA recipients will have mortgages and will be better off on DWA);

b. exceptionally, if the claimant has children and his income, including earnings and DWA, would be very little above income support level, loss of free school meals might take them below income support level;

c. if the claimant is receiving invalidity benefit and has entitlement to a large amount of additional pension, or if he has a significant amount of capital or another source of income;

d. if the claimant is on invalidity benefit and has a partner who is working (but we expect that some DWA recipients will have partners who are working and will be better off);

e. if the IVB recipient is doing therapeutic work permitted by regulations.

THE ARTS

Liverpool Playhouse

Mr. Alton: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the funding and future of the Liverpool Playhouse.

Mr. Renton: The funding of the Liverpool Playhouse is a matter for the Arts Council, and for the Merseyside local authorities and other local interests. However, I met hon. Members from Merseyside on 16 January to discuss the financial position of the company. I am well aware of the affection and loyalty that is felt for this famous theatre, and of the widespread concern for its future. The Arts Council has long shared that concern, and it is continuing to discuss funding arrangements with the Merseyside local authorities with a view to the local authorities aiming nearer to the level of financial contribution made by the Arts Council. I hope that there will be a successful outcome.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Sector Manpower

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the manpower figures for each part of nationalised industry in 1978-79 and 1988-89, showing the reduction or increase in each case and also the decrease in each sector due to denationalisation.

Mr. Mellor: Outturn data for the nationalised industries for 1978-79 and 1988-89 were published in appendix D of chapter 21 of the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1021). Over that period manpower fell by 1,062,000 from 1,843,000 to 781,000, a reduction of 57·6 per cent. Nationalised industries that were privatised between 1978-79 and 1988-89 employed about 650,000

people at the time of privatisation. Information on manpower figures for each nationalised industry for the years 1978-79 and 1988-89 can be found in the annual report and accounts of each industry for these years.

Alcohol and Tobacco Duty

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it remains Government policy that harmonisation of alcohol and tobacco duties must involve either effective restrictions or high minimum duty rates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's view on harmonisation remains that centrally determined duty rates are not necessary for completion of the single market, but that alcohol and tobacco need to be treated as special cases under an approach based on the free operation of market forces.

Mr. Donald Thompson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what conclusions he has come on the future structure of the beer duty following the recent consultation exercise with the trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Trade responses to the Customs and Excise consultative paper have not revealed any major obstacles to the introduction of an end-product duty on beer. I have therefore decided to replace in due course the present worts-based duty by a duty on the finished beer, subject to satisfactory arrangements being devised following further consultation with trade interests. I have asked Customs and Excise to begin discussions on the details of a new system.

Computers (Security)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he is taking to ensure the security of *(a)* Her Majesty's Treasury's computers in-house and *(b)* lap-top personal computers when used by civil servants outside his Department's offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is not Government policy to disclose details of the protective security measures for safeguarding computers used for official purposes. To do so would be of assistance to potential attackers and would therefore reduce the effectiveness of the measures. These measures are kept under review.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which sectors of the British economy were in balance of payments surplus in 1979 and for the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* Industrial sector data of imports and exports on a balance of payments basis are normally available only for years in which input-output tables are compiled. Input-output tables exist for 1979 and 1984, and a simple update of 1984 to 1985 was carried out. For these years, the energy and services industrial sectors were in balance of payments surplus. The table gives the relevant data for these and the other main sectors of the economy.

Exports less imports of goods and services by industrial sector, on a balance of payments basis

£ billion

	1979	*1984*	*1985*
Agriculture	−1·8	−1·2	−2·3
Energy	−1·5	+5·9	+6·9
Manufacturing	−3·7	−15·3	−14·3
Services etc.	+7·4	+10·6	+13·3
Overall balance	+0·5	−0·9	+3·6

Notes on the table:

The industrial sectors are defined in terms of the 1980 Standard Industrial Classification as follows:

Agriculture: Division 0.
Energy: Division 1.
Manufacturing: Divisions 2-4.
Services etc.: Divisions 5-9.

The table is restricted to trade in goods and services, and does not include flows of interest, profits and dividends, and transfers. These items are included in the overall measure of the balance of payments for the United Kingdom.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Government Appointees

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of all Government-appointed nominees to the Northern Ireland Sports Council since its formation, giving the year of appointment and the length of service in each case.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* The information requested is set out in the table with names in alphabetical order. Length of service of members still serving is taken as up to January 1991.

Name	*Year of appointment*	*Length of service*
Allen, D. F.	1990	4 months
Allen, J. H.	1974	16 years
Allen, R.	1981	1 year
Andrews, D. G.	1986	4 years, 4 months
Barr, J. W. S.	1977	3 years
Bell, Mrs. M.	1976	4 years
Bloomfield, Lady	1989	1 year, 10 months
Boyd, Mrs. D. M.	1981	1 year
Burns, K. F.	1977	4 years
Caldwell, W. A.	1981	7 years
Cannon, J. F.	1974	2 years
Carey, J.	1977	4 years
Carlin, A.	1986	4 years, 4 months
Clarke, Ms. A.	1990	4 months
Clarke, A. N.	1977	4 years
Close, S. A.	1977	3 years
Colhoun, R. S.	1974	3 years
Comerton, Mrs. E.	1988	3 years
Conlon, Dr. W. A.	1974	7 years
Connolly, B.	1976	1 year
Connor, R.	1982	6 years
Corry, W. C.	1974	3 years
Craig, Rev. R. G.	1977	3 years
Crozier, E.	1977	3 years
Dixon, T. R. V.	1981	5 years
Donnelly, T.	1981	1 year
Edwards, B. G.	1981	1 year
Faulkner, H.	1980	1 year
Farrington, L. W.	1981	1 year
Gallogly, S.	1986	4 years
Ginn, G. J.	1981	5 years
Girvan, A. H.	1974	3 years
Glancy, Dr. B.	1989	1 year 10 months

Name	Year of appointment	Length of service
Hamilton, J.	1974	3 years
Haslett, V. C.	1982	6 years
Hendra, Mrs. A.	1988	2 years 4 months
Hendra, M. R.	1977	2 years
Heron, P. J.	1976	1 year
Hewitt, F. S. A.	1988	2 years 4 months
Hogg, Mrs. M.	1977	2 years
Huey, S. S. J.	1974	2 years
Hunter, J. A.	1976	1 year
Jamison, J. Q.	1974	3 years
Johnston, A. N.	1974	3 years
Johnston, Mrs. M.	1986	1 year
Johnstone, H. A.	1974	3 years
King, W. H.	1986	4 years 4 months
Kirkwood, R. W. C.	1981	6 years
Kyle, Mrs. M.	1974	3 years
Lamont, R. A.	1974	3 years
Lapsley, J. C.	1974	3 years
Lee, I.	1988	2 years 4 months
Linehan, A. J.	1977	3 years
Martin, Mrs. C.	1977	3 years
Mayne, H.	1988	2 years
Miller, S.	1988	2 years
McBriar, J. T.	1982	4 years
McCloy, Mrs. J.	1986	4 years
McCloy, T.	1981	1 year
McColgan, R. J.	1981	1 year
McCullough, R.	1982	4 years
McKeag, H.	1981	1 year
McKeever, J.	1981	9 years
McKelvey, Mrs. M. R.	1986	4 years 4 months
McKie, P.	1976	1 year
McManus, Mrs. R.	1974	3 years
McNicholl, Miss M. H.	1986	2 years
McShane, P. R.	1986	4 years
McWilliams P. H.	1982	6 years
O'Connell, W.	1974	1 year
O'Doherty, Ms. A.	1990	4 months
O'Donoghue, P.	1977	3 years
O'Neill, J. F.	1974	3 years
O'Neill, V. P.	1974	1 year
Peacock, R.	1977	4 years
Peters, Dr. M. E.	1974	20 years
Pollock, J. S.	1986	4 years 4 months
Redpath, Mrs. J.	1981	1 year
Richardson, W. F.	1974	3 years
Robinson, MP, P. D.	1990	4 months
Rose, A. D.	1974	3 years
Sansom, Rev. Canon C. N.	1981	1 year
Scott, K.	1986	4 years 4 months
Shearer, E. D. R.	1974	3 years
Simpson, Mrs. M.	1974	3 years
Sleith, Rev. A. A.	1977	3 years
Stelfox, J. D.	1988	2 years 4 months
Storey, G.	1977	3 years
Sweetnam, Dr. J.	1981	1 year
Traynor, Mrs. R.	1981	5 years
Turner, E.	1981	5 years
Walsh, J.	1990	4 months
Warke, Dr. L.	1977	2 years
Watson, W. G.	1982	3 years
Wheeler, F. A.	1974	6 years
Williams, Miss J.	1982	10 years
Wilson, D. A.	1987	1 year
Wilson, Miss M.	1977	9 years

PRIME MINISTER

House of Lords

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of all those members of the House of Lords nominated to sit therein since 1 August 1987, together with the dates upon which they took their seats.

The Prime Minister: Peerages created since 1 August 1987 are as follows, together with the dates on which the holders were introduced.

Title	Created	Introduced
Lord Rippon of Hexham	5 October 1987	20 October 1987
Lord Cocks of Hartcliffe	6 October 1987	20 October 1987
Lord Thomas of Gwydir	7 October 1987	21 October 1987
Lord Jay	8 October 1987	21 October 1987
Lord Pym	9 October 1987	28 October 1987
Lord Joseph	12 October 1987	28 October 1987
Lord Dormand of Easington	13 October 1987	3 November 1987
Lord Prior	14 October 1987	11 November 1987
Lord Crickhowell	15 October 1987	4 November 1987
Lord Colnbrook	16 October 1987	10 November 1987
Lord St. John of Fawsley	19 October 1987	4 November 1987
Lord Mason of Barnsley	20 October 1987	3 November 1987
Lord Carlisle of Bucklow	2 November 1987	10 November 1987
Lord Jenkin of Roding	3 November 1987	11 November 1987
Lord Ross of Newport	4 November 1987	8 December 1987
Lord Callaghan of Cardiff	5 November 1987	17 November 1987
Lord Rees	16 November 1987	24 November 1987
Lord Jenkins of Hillhead	20 November 1987	1 December 1987
Lord Jakobovits	5 February 1988	9 February 1988
Baroness Hart of South Lanark	8 February 1988	10 February 1988
Lord Jauncey of Tullichettle	9 February 1988	9 February 1988
Lord Donaldson of Lymington	15.February 1988	24 February 1988
Lord Armstrong of Ilminster	26 February 1988	15 March 1988
Lord Alexander of Weedon	11 July 1988	12 July 1988
Lord Rees-Mogg	8 August 1988	25 October 1988
Lord Butterfield	10 August 1988	9 November 1988
Lord Mackenzie-Stuart	18 October 1988	30 November 1988
Lord Macaulay of Bragar	9 January 1989	18 January 1989
Lord Sainsbury of Preston Candover	31 January 1989	31 January 1989
Lord Lewis of Newnham	8 February 1989	8 February 1989
Baroness Oppenheim-Barnes	9 February 1989	28 February 1989

Title	*Created*	*Introduced*
Lord Fraser of Carmyllie	10 February 1989	22 February 1989
Lord Sharp of Grimsdyke	21 July 1989	26 July 1989
Lord Walton of Detchant	24 July 1989	11 October 1989
Lord McColl of Dulwich	25 July 1989	26 July 1989
Lord Fieldhouse	26 February 1990	7 March 1990
Baroness Park of Monmouth	27 February 1990	6 March 1990
Lord Tombs	28 February 1990	13 March 1990
Lord Clinton-Davis	8 May 1990	8 May 1990
Lord Morris of Castle Morris	9 May 1990	9 May 1990
Baroness Eccles of Moulton	10 May 1990	15 May 1990
Lord Richard	14 May 1990	15 May 1990
Lord Wade of Chorlton	16 May 1990	22 May 1990
Lord Cavendish of Furness	17 May 1990	6 June 1990
Baroness Cumberlege	18 May 1990	23 May 1990
Baroness Brigstocke	21 May 1990	23 May 1990
Lord Soulsby of Swaffham Prior	22 May 1990	12 June 1990
Lord Holme of Cheltenham	29 May 1990	6 June 1990
Lord Varley	30 May 1990	5 June 1990
Baroness Hollis of Heigham	1 June 1990	11 June 1990
Baroness Flather	11 June 1990	19 June 1990
Lord Pearson of Rannoch	18 June 1990	19 June 1990
Lord Porter of Luddenham	[1]16 July 1990	24 July 1990
Baroness Castle of Blackburn	[2]16 July 1990	18 July 1990
Lord Lane of Horsell	17 July 1990	17 July 1990
Lord Haslam	13 August 1990	17 October 1990
Baroness Dunn	24 August 1990	9 October 1990
Lord Waddington	4 December 1990	4 December 1990
Lord Sterling of Plaistow	17 January 1991	To be introduced

[1] a.m.
[2] p.m.

Official Histories

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many official histories have been commissioned by the Government since 1960; what are their titles; when each was commenced; when each was completed; who were the authors; and what was the cost of each;

(2) how many Government-sponsored official histories are currently in preparation; when they were commissioned; who are the authors; what are the estimated dates of completion; and what is the estimated cost of each.

The Prime Minister: The original programme of official histories commissioned by the War Cabinet covered the military and civil history of the second world war.

Subsequently two further groups of wartime histories were commissioned, tables A and B;

On 9 March 1966 the then Prime Minister announced that the official programme would be extended to include selected periods or episodes of peacetime history. The following were commissioned, table C.

Title	*Author*	*Commissioned*	*Completion Publication*
Table A			
SOE in France	M. R. D. Foot	1960	1966
SOE in the Far East[2]	C. Cruickshank	1980	1983
SOE in Scandinavia[2]	C. Cruickshank	1984	1986
SOE in Greece[2]	R. R. M. Clogg	1984	Estimated completion 1991
SOE in the Low Countries[2]	M. R. D. Foot	1987	Estimated completion 1991
SOE in Yugoslavia[2]	M. C. Wheeler	1987	Estimated completion 1992
SOE in Italy	C. M. Woods	1989	Estimated completion 1992-93
Table B			
British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol I	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1979
British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol II	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1981
British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol III (Part I)	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1984
British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol III (Part II)	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and others	1971	1988
British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol IV	Professor Sir Harry Hinsley and C. A. G. Simkins	1971	1990
British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol V	Professor Sir Michael Howard	1971	1990
Table C			

Title	*Author*	*Commissioned*	*Completion Publication*
Environmental Planning	Professor J. B. Cullingworth	1969	Published in 4 Vols. between 1975-1981
Nationalisation of British Industry	Professor Sir Norman Chester	1969	1975
Colonial Development[2]	D. J. Morgan	1969	Published in 5 Vol.s 1980
External Economic Policy[1]	Professor L. S. Pressnell	1974	Vol. I published 1987 Vol. II estimated date of publication 1992
Defence Organisation Since 1945[1]	Professor D. Cameron Watt	1974	Estimated date of publication 1992
British Part in the Korean War[1]	General Sir Anthony Farrar-Hockley	1978	Vol. I published 1990 Estimated publication date Vol. II 1992
The Health Services Since the War[1]	Dr. Charles Webster	1978	Vol. I published 1988 Estimated publication of Vol. II 1992-3

[1] currently in preparation.
[2] main preparation and all publication costs met by commercial publishers.

The cost of preparing official histories is borne on the votes of several Government Departments, mainly the Cabinet Office; the cost of printing, publishing and distribution falls to HMSO. (Revenue from sales goes towards offsetting these costs). It is not possible without disproportionate cost to itemise the cost of individual histories.

Ministers (Overseas Visits)

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list in ranked order and by name the numbers of overseas trips undertaken by Ministers since June 1987.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally and could not be produced without incurring disproportionate costs.

Sanctions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what criteria have been adopted to judge the success of the application of sanctions upon Iraq imposed under the authorisation of the United Nations.

The Prime Minister: The test of the effectiveness of sanctions is whether they persuade Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. After nearly six months this has not been achieved.

Security

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what guidance is issued to Ministers on answering questions from right hon. and hon. Members on matters affecting security during periods of armed conflict.

The Prime Minister: Normal procedures for answering questions on matters affecting security continue to apply.

Mr. Ian Richter

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has made on behalf of Ian Richter, a British citizen presently held in Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We remain concerned about the position of Mr. Ian Richter. We have regularly raised his case with the Iraqi authorities and our ambassador did so again shortly before he left Baghdad earlier this month. We have made arrangements to ensure that Mr. Richter continues to receive visits and comforts. We are in close touch with his family here.

WALES

Tourism

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to improve the overseas marketing of tourism within Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The overseas promotion of Wales as a tourist destination is a statutory responsibility of the British Tourist Authority, although the Wales tourist board can, with the agreement of the BTA, act on its behalf.

Following a meeting I had with the chairman of the WTB last June, the board commissioned a study intended to identify ways of improving the effectiveness of the overseas marketing of Wales, within the existing legal framework.

I understand that the report is expected very shortly. I assure my hon. Friend that Ministers will consider its findings very carefully.

Reading Standards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call an all-Wales conference of Her Majesty's inspectors, local education authority parent-teacher associations and teachers to discuss the reading standards of seven-year-olds in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 17 January 1991, column *569-70*.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all sites where a total quantity of 25 tonnes or more of dangerous substances are present, quoting the ordnance survey eight-figure grid reference number for each site.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not available in the format requested. Each Health and Safety Executive area office keeps available for public inspection lists of premises in its area, by name and address, where dangerous substances

are present and where notification required under certain legislation has been received by the Health and Safety Executive.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Eggs

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number and value of eggs *(a)* imported into the United Kingdom and *(b)* exported from the United Kingdom, between (i) September 1988 and August 1989 and (ii) September 1989 and August 1990.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is as follows:

	Number of eggs Thousands	*Value* £
(a) Eggs imported into the United Kingdom		
(i) 1 September 1988 to 31 August 1989	276,432	9,339,648
(ii) 1 September 1989 to 31 August 1990	684,988	29,039,383
(b) Eggs exported from the United Kingdom		
(i) 1 September 1988 to 31 August 1989	395,018	13,583,133
(ii) 1 September 1989 to 31 Auguest 1990	100,371	4,549,383

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North dated 20 December 1990, *Official Report*, column *296*, on CAP expenditure, if he will state the total net cost to the Exchequer of support for agriculture and the common agricultural policy, after deducting any relevant refunds and grants received; and if he will also show the amount per head of the population of the United Kingdom which this net figure represents.

Mr. Curry: The total figures, and the equivalent per head of United Kingdom population, which my hon. Friend has requested, are as follows:

Estimate for 1990-91	*Total (£ million)*	*£/head*
Exchequer expenditure on the common agricultural policy in the United Kingdom	1,900	33
Receipts from the European Community in the relation to agriculture	1,600	28
Total Exchequer expenditure on agricultural grants and subsidies in the United Kingdom (EC and national)	1,950	34
Cost to the Exchequer of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the total Community budget (all EC expenditure including agriculture)	2,100	37

It would be misleading to net off EC receipts in relation to agriculture from Exchequer expenditure on the CAP, because the United Kingdom is a net contributor to the EC budget. It is not possible, for the reasons given in the previous reply, to estimate the cost of the United Kingdom's contribution to agricultural expenditure elsewhere in the Community.

Expenditure on Food

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk North dated 13 November 1990, *Official Report*, column *118*, if he will now include with the information already given the expenditure on food at 1989 prices for 1960, 1970, 1980 and 1989.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is given in the table.

Consumers' expenditure on household food in the United Kingdom

	Household expenditure on food at current prices £ *million*	*Expenditure on food as a percentage of total consumers expenditure per cent.*	[1] *Household expenditure on food in real terms* £ *million*
1960	4,228	25·0	38,789
1970	6,369	20·0	39,559
1980	23,655	16·9	40,785
1989	39,181	11·9	39,181

[1] United Kingdom household expenditure on food at current prices deflated by the Retail Price Index (all items) 1989 = 100.
Source: United Kingdom National Accounts, CSO.

Sheep and Cow Subsidies

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the sheep subsidy and hill cow payments will be made; what delays there have been in payment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Government are not yet in a position to announce the arrangements for payment of hill livestock compensatory allowances in 1991. This is because problems have arisen over the detailed implementation of a new EC ceiling on payments of 1·4 livestock units per hectare. Claim forms and explanatory leaflets will be issued to producers as quickly as possible, once these problems have been resolved. The Government are well aware of the importance of making the HLCA payments in the early part of the year and every effort will be made to ensure that payments commence quickly.

Fishing

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to implement the EC Council of Fisheries Ministers decision to have an eight consecutive days tie-up period in each month.

Mr. Curry: I expect implementing regulation to be laid before Parliament before the end of this month and to come into force on 1 February.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Product Liability Directive

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what inquiries have been received from the European Commission concerning the implementation by the United Kingdom of the 1985 EC product liability directive; what replies have been sent by his Department; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his earlier question on the same subject, *Official Report*, 19 December 1990, column *187*. The position is unchanged.

Exhibitions

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the relative cost to British machinery manufacturers wishing to exhibit at international exhibitions abroad or arranging space bookings, stand building, etc. *(a)* directly with the exhibition and *(b)* through the governmental system.

Mr. Sainsbury: Under my Department's export initiative, companies participating as a British group at the overseas trade fair are provided with space, a shell stand and essential display aids at 50 per cent. of the estimated cost. Assistance towards the cost of travel is also available for group members exhibiting outside western Europe. This support is provided generally on three occasions in any one country.

No subsidy is available for independent exhibitors. Such companies negotiate the presentation standard they require with exhibition organisers and stand contractors.

Textile Industry

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the United Kingdom's relative position in world textile machinery exports in *(a)* 1970 and *(b)* 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information is readily available only for the OECD countries and in a form which includes leather working machinery. On this basis the United Kingdom was the second-largest OECD exporter of textile machines to world markets in 1970 and the seventh largest in 1988, the latest year for which data are obtainable.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what request his Department received to supply support to Camber International Ltd. of Leicester at the recent international textile manufacturing exhibition in China; what response was made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: On 23 February 1990 my Department formally offered to provide financial support to a group of British companies recruited by the British Textile Machinery Association to participate in this exhibition. An application from Camber International Ltd. to join the supported group was received early in May 1990. The association was informed on 10 May 1990 that the company was not eligible. This was because DTI trade fair assistance is restricted to three participations in any country, and Camber International had benefited from such support on three previous occasions in China.

The company subsequently appealed against the decision on the grounds that it had been subject of successive takeovers and that in its new form the company had not previously exhibited in China. The appeal was rejected because it was considered that the reconstituted company was still producing broadly the same range of equipment as had benefited from the previous supported exhibition participations in China.

United States Trade Act

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart concerning the so-called Super 301 provision of the United States Trade Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have taken frequent opportunities over the past two years to make clear to our United States counterparts our opposition to the provisions of the United States Trade Act which permit unilateral GATT-illegal action. Fortunately, the legislative authority permitting new actions under the "Super 301" provision has now time-expired.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had with EEC countries on review of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, together with EC colleagues, attended the GATT ministerial meeting in Brussels last month which discussed, among other things, how best to phase out the multi-fibre arrangement as part of a general settlement of the Uruguay round, including the strengthening of GATT rules and disciplines. The Government hope that the talks, which were suspended over the question of agriculture, will soon reconvene.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a detailed breakdown of the £50 million reduction in central Government expenditure by his Department for 1991-92 as announced in the autumn statement as against the plans announced in the January 1990 public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Sainsbury: This information will be published next month in the new Trade and Industry departmental report.

TRANSPORT

Wheelchair Access

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make all forms of public transport more accessible to people in wheelchairs.

Mr. Freeman: We are working on the development and introduction of low-floor buses that can accommodate wheelchair users on regular services. We hope to start trials of such vehicles later this year.

British Rail has already made considerable progress in making its rolling stock accessible. All new Intercity trains are accessible in both first and standard class carriages and are also fitted with accessible toilet facilities.

Access to public transport infrastructure is also being improved. Where new facilities are being provided, or when older ones are being refurbished, the public transport authorities are providing access wherever reasonably practicable.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to assist local authorities to

lower pavement heights and kerbs to enable people in wheelchairs to move freely along main public thoroughfares and footpaths.

Mr. Freeman: In 1986, the Department issued advice to local authorities on the provision of dropped kerbs to help wheelchair users in conjunction with tactile surfaces to guide blind and partially sighted people at uncontrolled crossings.

We hope to issue similar advice for uncontrolled crossings and side streets shortly.

In both cases local authorities can install these facilities as part of their planned maintenance programmes.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he will list the items of personal and vehicle information that will be transferred to the new police national computer; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) whether he received advice from, or had meetings with, the Data Protection Registrar before deciding upon the nature of the closer links between the DVLA and the new police national computer;

(3) whether he intends to inform drivers of the items of personal information they provide that could be transferred to the new police national computer; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: DVLA has for many years passed to the police national computer organisation descriptive vehicle information and the names and addresses of vehicle keepers. No changes are planned to these arrangements. The information released at present from the driver record relates specifically to details about drivers who are disqualified. As a result of recommendations made by the road traffic law review committee, it is planned that details of all drivers on the DVLA record will be provided to the police national computer during 1992.

The DVLA registrations under the Data Protection Act 1984 indicate that details from both the vehicle and driver registers are given to the police. The planned changes in the arrangements for providing additional details from the driver record do not require consultation with the Data Protection Registrar. The information on the police national computer facilitates law enforcement.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he proposes to ensure that the benefits of the channel tunnel are shared by people and industry in Swindon and the south-west.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has the statutory responsibility for planning and running rail services in the United Kingdom, including those which will use the channel tunnel. Its initial response to the recent proposal from the Transport Users Consultative Committee for western England for a major upgrading of the Reading-Ashford route for channel tunnel services to and from the west indicated that it is confident that its current plans for such services for 1993 will meet the needs of the west country.

Cycle Lanes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in descending order the London boroughs by proportion of cycle lanes to total highway in each borough.

Mr. Chope: This information is not available.

Speed Limits

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has estimated the cost and if he has plans to provide additional finance to enable local authorities to introduce 20 mph speed limit zones in accordance with his Department's recent guidelines.

Mr. Chope: We estimate that a 20 mph speed limit zone can be introduced for as little as £50,000. Schemes are eligible for transport supplementary grant if they have a significant casualty reduction potential and can therefore be considered to be a local safety scheme. Over £31 million has been earmarked for local safety schemes within the minor works allocation of the 1991-92 TSG settlement.

A4/M4 Corridor Study

Sir Barney Hayhoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive and publish the A4/M4 corridor study from his consultants.

Mr. Chope: I have not yet received the consultants' final report on this study. I intend to publish it as soon as possible after its receipt.

London Transport (Private Bills)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chairman of London Transport detailing the cost in each year of presenting Private Bills to Parliament since the inception of London Regional Transport, listing the Bills, the costs associated with them and the outcome.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for London Transport. I am asking the chairman to let the hon. Member have whatever information is readily available.

EMPLOYMENT

Economic Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany for the years 1979 to 1989 and 1985 to 1989 the change in the numbers for (i) unemployed, (ii) GDP, (iii) manufacturing output and (iv) employment.

Mr. Jackson: The information on unemployment and employment is contained in the following table. No figures are available for the unified Germany.

	Annual average		
	United Kingdom (thousand)	*France (thousand)*	*Italy (thousand)*
Unemployment			
Change 1979 to 1989	710	920	1,181
Change 1985 to 1989	−1,244	−161	485

	Annual average		
	United Kingdom (thousand)	France (thousand)	Italy (thousand)
Civilian employment			
Change 1979 to 1989	1,374	179	776
Change 1985 to 1989	2,243	569	325

Source: OECD "Labour Force Statistics 1968-1988" and "Quarterly Labour Force Statistics Number 4 1990" (except United Kingdom, Employment Department).

Data for manufacturing output for the United Kingdom are published by the Central Statistical Office in *Economic Trends* and for other EC countries by the OECD in its monthly publication "Main Economic Indicators". Levels of gross domestic product for OECD countries can be obtained in the OECD publications "National Accounts—Main Aggregates—Volumes 1 1960-1988", part 6, table 7 for 1979 figures; and from "Main Economic Indicators—December 1990", part 3, for 1985 and 1989 figures. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the constituencies in Britain with more than 5,000 unemployed; and how long each constituency has been in that position.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is contained in the following table.

Constituency name	*Number of unemployed in December 1990 (not seasonally adjusted)*	*Number of months unemployment has been above 5,000*
Tottenham	7,599	1
Manchester Central	7,505	1
Liverpool Riverside	7,351	1
Hackney South and Shoreditch	7,322	1
Liverpool Walton	7,084	1
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	6,851	1
Bootle	6,790	1
Vauxhall	6,502	1
Birkenhead	6,432	1
Sunderland North	6,289	1
Nottingham East	6,265	1
Birmingham Small Heath	6,262	1
Sheffield Central	6,168	1
Tyne Bridge	6,161	1
Middlesbrough	6,000	1
Liverpool West Derby	5,972	1
Islington North	5,930	6
Knowsley North	5,910	1
Birmingham Ladywood	5,778	1
Knowsley South	5,698	1
Liverpool Broadgreen	5,680	1
Hornsey and Wood Green	5,594	2
Stretford	5,518	6
Bow and Poplar	5,429	5
Glasgow Springburn	5,401	1
Birmingham Sparkbrook	5,349	6
Bradford West	5,345	5
Lewisham Deptford	5,325	4
Peckham	5,321	2
Kingston-upon-Hull North	5,321	2
Bethnal Green and Stepney	5,249	1
Norwood	5,231	1
Leeds Central	5,171	1
Glasgow Maryhill	5,133	1
Islington South and Finsbury	5,105	1
Isle of Wight	5,097	1
Glasgow Provan	5,056	1
Kingston-upon-Hull West	5,023	1

[1] Unemployment has been above 5,000 throughout the period since parliamentary constituency data on unemployment first became available in June 1983.

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what is the level of youth unemployment in Liverpool:

(2) what is the level of unemployment in Liverpool:

(3) what is the level of long-term unemployment in Liverpool:

Mr. Jackson: The latest available data are given in the table:

Unemployment (not seasonally adjusted) in Liverpool Travel-to-Work-Area

	Date	*Number*
Total number of unemployed claimants	December 1990	63,743
Number of unemployed claimants who have been unemployed for 12 months or more	October 1990	27,596
Number of unemployed claimants aged 18 to 24 years	October 1990	20,100

Computers (Security)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he is taking to ensure the security of *(a)* his Department's computers in-house and *(b)* lap-top personal computers when used by civil servants outside his Department's offices.

Mr. Jackson: It is not Government policy to disclose details of the protective security measures for safeguarding computers used for official purposes. To do so would be of assistance to potential attackers and therefore reduce the effectiveness of the measures. These measures are kept under review.

Building Sites (Safety)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what response he has given to the Transport and General Workers Union on the subject of health and safety on temporary and mobile building sites draft directive of the European Commission, Cm/90/275–SYN–Z79.

Mr. Forth: I have referred the letter in question to the Health and Safety Executive since I believe that this is a matter best dealt with by it. I understand that it will reply direct to the Transport and General Workers Union shortly.

Manufactured Mineral Fibres

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the dangers to workers of handling manufactured mineral fibres; and if he proposes to take any steps to reduce these dangers.

Mr. Forth: The health effects of man-made mineral fibres (MMMF) were reviewed in 1989 by the Health and Safety Commission's Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances. As a consequence of this review a maximum exposure limit of two fibres per millilitre of air has been set for MMMF in schedule 1 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988 to supplement the already existing gravimetric MEL of 5 milligrammes per cubic metre. This additional MEL came into effect on 1 January 1991.

The COSHH Regulations specify the precautions which employers should take to prevent or adequately control exposure to hazardous substances, including MMMF. In addition, the Health and Safety Executive has recently published two guidance documents which give details of the specific measures which should be taken to reduce exposure to MMMF.

Restart Courses

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many organisations the Employment Service contracts to run Restart courses; how many Restart courses were organised within the last year by the Employment Service and how many by other organisations; what is the average cost of a Restart course run by the Employment Service and what is the average fee paid to other organisations that run Restart courses; what is the average length of a Restart course and what is the maximum length of such a course; how many participants on Restart courses fail to complete the course; what was the total amount paid to other organisations for running Restart courses within the last year; what is the average number of participants on Restart courses; how many people have participated on Restart courses within the last year; what are the basic aims and objectives of Restart courses; and how many unemployed claimants have been unemployed for more than two years.

Mr. Jackson: Questions on operational matters in the Employment Service executive agency are the responsibility of Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive. I have therefore referred the hon. Gentleman's questions about Restart courses to him to reply. The lastest available figures published in October 1990 show that, in the United Kingdom, 305,110 unemployed claimants have been unemployed for two years or more.

Oral Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average length of time taken and the average cost involved of officials' time in his Department preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions.

Mr. Jackson: The time taken in preparing briefs for oral parliamentary questions is not routinely recorded in the Employment Department. Estimates are, however, made where there is a likelihood of exceeding the disproportionate cost threshold, currently £250. However, following an interdepartmental exercise in 1972, in which the Employment Department participated, an assessment was made of the average cost throughout all Departments of answering an oral question. This assessment was based on staff time, using average rates of pay and associated costs for the grades concerned, together with a share of the cost of parliamentary sections and any substantial non-staff costs such as computer usage. This assessed figure is regularly updated and currently stands at £99.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what savings his Department would make were no notice given of oral questions to Ministers and they were answered without civil service time being used on briefings.

Mr. Jackson: No savings would be made and costs would almost certainly increase significantly. If the oral question is known in advance briefing can be tightly focused, thus avoiding the cost of producing a detailed brief, covering all subjects that could possibly arise.

Health Personnel Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of staff involved in servicing the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration and on nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine; and what is the annual cost of running these bodies.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 14 January 1991]:* A total of nine staff is involved in servicing the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration and the review body for nurses, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine. The total annual cost of running these bodies in 1989-90, the latest figures available, was £472,623.

ENVIRONMENT

Underground Structures

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has maps of London and other major cities which reveal both the geology and the man-made services below the surface.

Mr. Yeo: My Department holds sets of published geological maps which cover all major cities including London. Sets of maps of man-made services below the ground are not held.

Opencast Coal Mining

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current guidance given by him to local planning authorities in respect of opencast coal applications.

Mr. Yeo: Current guidance on the matters to be taken into account by mineral planning authorities when considering planning applications for opencast coal mining is contained in minerals planning guidance note 3 "Opencast Coal Mining", published by HMSO in May 1988. Copies are available in the House Library.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of all sites where a total quantity of 25 tonnes or more of dangerous substances are present, quoting the ordnance survey eight-figure grid reference number for each site.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

This information is not available in the format requested. Each Health and Safety Executive area office keeps available for public inspection lists of premises in its area, by name and address, where dangerous substances are present and where notification required under certain legislation has been received by the Health and Safety Executive.

Minerals Act

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the group to review the operation of the Minerals Act 1981 will be set up; and what the composition of the group will be.

Mr. Yeo: As announced in "This Common Inheritance", my officials are currently reviewing the operation of the provisions of the Minerals Act 1981. A small informal working group of planners and industry representatives is assisting in this.

Any proposals for change arising out of the work of the group will be subject to full consultation in the usual way.

Radioactive Discharges, Aldermaston

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all consents held by the Ministry of Defence establishment at Aldermaston to discharge radioactive substances to water or land.

Mr. Trippier: There is one approval issued to the Ministry of Defence establishment at Aldermaston under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 to discharge radioactive substances to water and land. It covers the discharge of treated effluent to the River Thames at Pangbourne, discharge of trade waste into the sewers of Bradfield rural district council and disposal of solid radioactive waste by transfer to the Drigg disposal site in Cumbria operated by British Nuclear Fuels.

Haringey Council (Accounts)

Sir Hugh Rossi: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he will have with the Audit Commissioners to deal with the failure of the borough of Haringey for five successive years to produce its accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 17 January 1991]:* I understand from the Audit Commission that the authority has held open its accounts for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 pending the resolution of legal matters, including the question of interest rate swaps, which have a possible bearing on those accounts. The accounts for 1987-88 have just been produced. The accounts for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90 are expected next month. It appears, therefore, that Haringey is at last taking action to produce its accounts for the years concerned.

HEALTH

Dialysis

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest figures for the cost of maintaining a person on haemodialysis for a year within a hospital renal unit and on home dialysis; and what is the cost of providing CAPD over the same period.

Mr. Dorrell: No major study of costs has been made in recent years. The latest estimates, based on a study undertaken for the Department in 1983, are as follows:

	£
Hospital haemodialysis	21,000
Home haemodialysis	17,000
CAPD	18,000

The figures are in 1989-90 prices and do not take account of changes in clinical practice since the study.

Organ Transplants

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the latest figure for the cost of a kidney transplant, heart lung transplant, lung transplant, liver transplant and transplants of other parts of the body; and if he will separately give the cost of the drug regime required to sustain the transplant within the human body on an annual basis.

Mr. Dorrell: The cost of organ transplantation varies between units and according to the complexity of the case. The figures represent the latest estimate of the likely range of costs involved in 1989-90 prices;

Hearts between £15,000 and £20,000
Livers between £20,000 and £30,000
Kidney around £10,000

No estimate is available of the cost of other organs.

Information is not collected centrally of the annual cost of the drug regime required to sustain organ transplants.

Hepatitis A

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of hepatitis A cases confirmed in schools during the past year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No information on the number of hepatitis A cases confirmed in schools is held separately. However, the total number of cases of hepatitis A in school-age children in England and Wales reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre (CDSC) of the public health laboratory service for the year 1990 was 2,518 (provisional figures).

All outbreaks are reported in the communicable disease report of the CDSC. Local consultants in communicable disease control are responsible for monitoring outbreaks and advising appropriate control measures.

Meningitis

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of meningitis there have been in the last six months; what was the figure for the equivalent period last year; and to what factors he attributes the change.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the overall figures for both meningitis and meningococcal meningitis.

Notifications reported to OPCS—England and Wales
(All data are provisional)

	Last 6 months 1990	*Last 6 months 1989*
Meningitis (all forms)	1,105	1,194
Meningococcal meningitis	369	470
Deaths[1]	55	96

[1] Deaths assigned to meningococcal infection.

It is not yet clear whether the small decline in numbers represents a new trend, reversing the upsurge which began in 1986, nor to what it might be attributable. The position is being monitored closely.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will enable diabetics to be supplied with needles for the Novopen on prescription through the national health service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: National health service supply arrangements for insulin pens and needles need to be considered together. Subject to our normal evaluation of individual brands, we would consider making pens and needles prescribable, as an alternative to syringes, if this could be done without additional cost. Discussions with suppliers are currently in progress.

Gulf Crisis

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical personnel and in what categories are being called upon to serve in Her Majesty's forces in the Gulf; and what assessment has been made of the effect on the quality of service and waiting lists in *(a)* Sunderland, *(b)* Durham and *(c)* Hartlepool.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 14 January at column *415*. No assessment has been made centrally of the impact on individual health authorities. We expect that all emergency cases will continue to be treated normally and that any effect on the treatment of non-emergency cases from waiting lists will be limited and short-lived.

Plymouth Health Authority

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will provide a table showing the waiting lists in the Plymouth health authority area, by hospital, for the surgical, orthopaedic, ear, nose and throat, eye and neurology specialties, for January, April, June, September and December of the current year.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is available only quarterly and is not collected centrally for individual hospitals. The latest available information for Plymouth health authority is given in the table.

Specialty	*June 1989*	*September 1989*	*December 1989*	*March 1990*
General surgery	1,027	1,093	1,093	1,098
Trauma and orthopaedics	1,129	1,086	1,231	1,223
Ear, nose and throat	1,116	1,116	1,069	945
Ophthalmology	616	631	549	431
Neurology	25	43	44	41

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what examination he has undertaken of the observance by Plymouth health authority of the procedures governing competitive tendering and the award of contracts in respect of the contract for the lease of its transport fleet.

Mr. Dorrell: None. I am advised that the current contract for the provision of leased cars to Plymouth health authority has been extended to March 1991 to enable the authority to link with Cornwall health authority in a joint tendering exercise to achieve improved value for money. That exercise is being carried out in full accordance with the standing orders of the health authorities concerned, and is subject to independent statutory audit.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will provide a table showing the quarterly spending on office refurbishment and equipment for 1989-90 and 1990-91 by Plymouth health authority;

(2) if he will provide a table showing what moneys have been paid by Plymouth health authority to private nursing homes and other organisations not directly accountable to the authority for each year 1988-89 to 1990-91, inclusive.

Mr. Dorrell: Information in the form requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Vernon Seccombe, the chairman of Plymouth health authority, for details.

Elderly People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 6 December, *Official Report*, column 174, he will make a further statement on the action programme in favour of the elderly.

Mr. Dorrell: On 26 November 1990 the Social Affairs Council reached a decision for a Community action programme for the elderly in the employment, social security and health areas. The action programme will concentrate on: the exchange of information and experience; the establishment of a monitoring centre; and consideration of the feasibility and usefulness of establishing a network of innovative experiences.

A European Year of the Elderly was proposed for 1993.

Social Work Students

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what action he is taking to ensure that adequate funding is available to social work agencies taking practice students on placement;

(2) what action he is taking to rectify the shortfall in practice placements for social work students;

(3) what action he is taking to ensure that enough qualified social work practice teachers are available by 1995 to meet directives of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Employers in the personal social services are responsible for ensuring that they have adequate numbers of suitably qualified staff. In consequence they have a primary interest in providing high-quality practice experience for social work students. We recognise that it is important to secure this provision and, to this end, we shall shortly be announcing a new initiative aimed at assisting employers to boost the supply of practice teachers and placements as part of a wider training strategy for the personal social services.

Nurses (Grading Appeals)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many grading appeals have been received by nurses employed by the Mersey region; what is the average time taken in dealing with an appeal; how many are still outstanding; and when it is anticipated all appeals will have been heard.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of health service funds were spent on providing facilities for breast cancer screening for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government began setting up a comprehensive breast screening programme in 1987.

The proportion of health service funds spent on providing facilities for breast screening in England for each financial year since 1987 is:

	Total NHS Funds (Gross) £ million	*Cost of Breast Cancer Screening £ million*	*Percentage of Total Funds*
1987-88	17,657	5·894	0·03
1988-89	19,604	18·182	0·09
1989-90	21,147	31·834	0·15
1990-91	23,687	25·573	0·10

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list all the hospitals in England and Wales which provide full facilities for the screening of breast cancer and the total number of patients screened for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information is not available in the form requested. The Government began setting up a comprehensive breast screening programme in 1987. The service is provided mainly on a supra-district basis and not every screening centre is based at a hospital. Mobile screening units and static units not based in hospitals are also used. The table shows a list of districts in which breast screening services are based.

Available figures show that from April 1988 to March 1990, in England, Scotland and Wales, 304,952 women were screened. These figures apply only to the centres with data for full years and therefore do not reflect our overall activity in breast screening.

Host districts of NHS breast screening programme

Northern Regional Health Authority
Newcastle
Gateshead
North Tees
West Cumbria

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
Huddersfield
York
Hull
Leeds Eastern

Trent Regional Health Authority
Nottingham
Leicestershire
South Lincolnshire
Rotherham
South Derbyshire
Sheffield

East Anglian Regional Health Authority
West Norfolk and Wisbech
Peterborough
East Suffolk
Norwich
Cambridge

North West Thames Regional Health Authority
Riverside
Barnet
South Bedfordshire

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
West Essex
Bloomsbury
North East Essex
City and Hackney
Waltham Forest
Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Haringey
Southend

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
Brighton
Canterbury and Thanet
Camberwell

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
South West Surrey
Worthing
Wandsworth

Wesssex Regional Health Authority
Southampton
Isle of Wight
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
East Dorset
Swindon/Bath
Winchester

Oxford Regional Health Authority
Aylesbury Vale
Northampton
Wycombe
Milton Keynes
Kettering
West Berkshire
East Berkshire
Oxfordshire

South Western Regional Health Authority
Cornwall
Plymouth

Bristol and Weston
Exeter
Cheltenham
Somerset

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
North Staffordshire
Coventry
Dudley/Wolverhampton
Walsall/Sandwell
Shropshire
Mid Staffordshire
South East Staffordshire
West Birmingham
South Birmingham
Bromsgrove

Mersey Regional Health Authority
Liverpool
Warrington
Crewe
Chester
Macclesfield
Wirral

North Western Regional Health Authority
South Manchester
Wigan
Bolton
East Lancashire
North Lancashire

DEFENCE

Hospital Beds (Service Personnel)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his meetings with Scottish health authorities about beds for wounded service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As part of the contingency plans for provision of treatment for casualties from the Gulf, discussions have been held at official level with the NHS management executive for health in Scotland. Scottish facilities will be available as required.

Boeing AWACS

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of the orders placed with British firms under the Boeing AWACS offset arrangements.

Mr. Alan Clark: Boeing has to date submitted seven progress reports listing contracts placed with United Kingdom companies to the value of $1,586 million, of which we have so far agreed that $1,149 million should count for offset—now referred to as industrial participation—credit purposes.

Service Personnel (Meals)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for each armed service and by operational area and region the average weekly cost of providing meals for service personnel.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current average weekly cost of public funded food is set out in the table:

Theatre	*Army* £	*RAF* £	*Royal Navy* £	*Total* £
United Kingdom	655,200	353,808	175,812	1,184,820
Germany	120,961	31,558	—	152,519
Cyprus	34,858	11,866	—	46,724
Gibraltar	6,355	3,531	3,531	13,417
Hong Kong	8,600	246	1,597	10,443
Brunei	1,286	—	—	1,286
Belize	29,075	6,203	—	35,277
Nepal	180	—	—	180
Royal Navy Ships	—	—	200,018	200,018
Falkland Islands	15,925	22,295	—	38,220
Gulf	432,432	51,251	—	483,683
Ascension Island	—	3,000	—	3,000
Total	1,304,872	483,758	380,958	2,169,587

Public Relations

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what public relations, public affairs or marketing companies are advising him; on what basis they were appointed; what is the cost, tenure and nature of their appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The MOD does not employ any public relations, public affairs or marketing companies to act as advisors. On occasion, companies are retained on a specific contract basis to assist with the production of films, exhibitions and publications and with attitude surveys and market research. In these instances they always work to strict specifications drawn up and controlled by departmental officials.

RAF Nimrods

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum runway length required for United Kingdom airfields designated as planned diversionary airfields on training sorties by RAF Nimrods.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figure is 6,000 ft.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Refurbishment Costs

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the expected total cost of the refurbishment of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Whitehall.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The total expected cost, on a cash basis, spread over 18 years, is £98 million.

Immigration

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details for each year from 1980 to 1990 of the number of people applying for entry clearance certificates both for a temporary visit and for permanent settlement at British High Commissions in *(a)* Jamaica, *(b)* Barbados, *(c)* Trinidad and Tobago and *(d)* Guyana and the numbers refused a certificate.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The number applying for visitor entry clearances at the four posts, with the number refused, is as follows:

	Jamaica		*Barbados*	
	Applied	*Refused*	*Applied*	*Refused*
1983	4,247	297	3,342	n/a
1984	3,556	293	4,148	n/a
1985	3,695	340	4,120	n/a
1986	4,159	565	3,373	[1]82
1987	3,084	619	2,322	[1]120
1988	3,121	342	1,489	[1]100
1989	2,399	387	1,466	[1]103
1990	2,634	298	1,037	[1]114

[1] Refusal figures for Barbados are for both settlement and visit.
n/a = not available.
No figures are available prior to 1983.

	Trinidad		*Guyana*	
	Applied	*Refused*	*Applied*	*Refused*
1983	5,382	24	n/a	n/a
1984	5,819	17	n/a	n/a
1985	3,546	22	n/a	n/a
1986	2,098	20	1,807	109
1987	1,863	70	1,461	93
1988	1,561	83	1,472	81
1989	1,035	91	1,487	153
1990	852	106	1,063	76

n/a = not available.
No figures are available prior to 1983.

The number applying for settlement entry clearances with the number refused is as follows:

	Jamaica		*Barbados*	
	Applied	*Refused*	*Applied*	*Refused*
1983	371	67	111	n/a
1984	331	58	90	n/a
1985	324	77	102	n/a
1986	377	65	90	[1]
1987	396	60	86	[1]
1988	408	44	62	[1]
1989	318	63	51	[1]
1990	498	116	119	[1]

[1] Refusal figures for Barbados are for both settlement and visit.
n/a = not available.
No figures are available prior to 1983.

	Trinidad and Tobago		*Guyana*	
	Applied	*Refused*	*Applied*	*Refused*
1983	49	7	n/a	n/a
1984	53	5	n/a	n/a
1985	92	3	n/a	n/a
1986	74	3	105	18
1987	60	2	96	11
1988	92	5	92	10
1989	44	9	126	11
1990	102	8	110	14

n/a = not available.
No figures are available prior to 1983.

Computers (Security)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he is taking to ensure the security of *(a)* his Department's computers in-house and *(b)* lap-top personal computers when used by his civil servants outside his Department's offices.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is not Government policy to disclose details of the protective security measures for safeguarding computers used for official purposes.

Baltic States

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Soviet Government on their military intervention in the Baltic states and other republics; whether he proposes to raise the situation within the CSCE process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Soviet forces' actions in Vilnius and the threats made against the other Baltic states are unacceptable, and we deeply deplore their tragic consequences. We have expressed our concerns to the Soviet authorities in the strongest terms. The Twelve have also said that the use of force and threats in the Baltic states is unacceptable and have made it clear that economic assistance to the Soviet Union cannot continue on any basis other than shared values and objectives. EC aid will not be implemented if military repression in Lithuania is prolonged or extended to the other Baltic states.

Soviet actions in Lithuania contravene the Soviet Union's commitments under the Paris charter. We call on the Soviet authorities to honour their obligations under the charter and their other international commitments. We have raised the question of Lithuania in the CSCE meeting on the peaceful settlement of disputes at Valletta, and are considering what further action can be taken in the CSCE framework.

Iraq (Sanctions)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will outline and present, in detail, an appraisal of the effectiveness of United Nations sanctions against Iraq, the areas judged to require further action in order to tighten and improve their effectiveness and the time scale over which agreed objectives could be achieved in bringing such pressure to bear on the imports and exports from Iraq, so as to fully isolate the regime and cripple its economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The overall test of the effectiveness of sanctions is whether they persuade Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. After five months there is no evidence that sanctions alone will reverse Saddam Hussein's policy. They have so far caused no serious disruptions in the Iraqi economy.

Above all, sanctions have had a negligible effect on Iraqi military capability. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said in the House on 15 January, they are unlikely to achieve such a decisive rundown of Saddam Hussein's military machine that he will leave Kuwait.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of those countries breaking the trading embargo with Iraq;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those countries in receipt of British overseas aid known to have broken the trading embargo on Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We co-operate closely with the Governments of friendly countries exchanging information about the practical implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 661, and have alerted them when we have had information that their companies might be engaged in violations. Any such approach has been made in confidence. It is the responsibility of the United Nations sanctions committee to take action on sanctions violations.

Cyprus

Mr. Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice he is giving to British subjects, in the light of the Gulf crisis, who are either resident in Cyprus or intending to travel there for business or tourist reasons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We see no reason for visitors to Cyprus to change their plans in the light of developments in the Gulf. We have not considered it necessary to give specific advice to the British community in Cyprus. We are keeping the situation under close review.

Overseas Aid

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* those countries in receipt of British overseas aid known to manufacture and export to other countries chemical or biological weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Only Iraq, the Soviet Union and the United States of America have publicly acknowledged possession of chemical weapons. None of these is in receipt of British overseas aid, although a know-how fund for the Soviet Union has been announced. No country has publicly admitted to the possession of biological weapons. It is not our practice to comment on the detailed information available to us about countries suspected of manufacturing, or exporting, chemical or biological weapons.

SCOTLAND

Harbours

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the total amount contributed by his Department to harbour improvement projects in each year since 1984-85; and if he will detail the distribution of the total sum in each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1984-85 the grants paid by the Scottish Office for harbour and pier projects have been as follows:

1984-85

	£
Fisheries	
Peterhead	57,130
Keiss	21,184
Lochinver	20,009
Lybster	5,164
Mallaig	1,044,714
Wick	10,590
Port Seton	12,128
Blacksness	251,445
Campbeltown	23,327
Gairloch	3,670
Arbroath	60,783
Total Fisheries	1,510,144
Transport	
South Isles Ferry Terminals	179,275
Outer North Isles Terminals	23,201
Port Askaig	18,197
Fionnphort-Iona Ferry Terminals	377,016
Achnacroish Ferry Terminal	101,672
Feolin Ferry Terminal	105,443
Foula Pier	11,357
West Burrafirth Terminal	84,099
Tobermory Pier	121,049
Brodick Pier	35,488
Kennacraig Ferry Terminal	73,017
Gourock Pier	103,520
Port Ellen Pier	21,382
Mallaig	144,291
Scrabster	276,853
Total Transport	1,675,860
Total Fisheries and Transport	3,186,004

1985-86

	£
Fisheries	
Fraserburgh	48,452
Keiss	21,950
Lochinver	310
Mallaig	323,596
Symbister	28,938
Arbroath	130,666
Total Fisheries	553,912
Transport	
Outer North Isles Terminals	1,686
Whitehall Pier, Stronsay	93,158
Moaness Pier, Hoy	60,451
Gott Bay Pier	7,643
Port Askaig	35,286
Bruray Out Skerries	325,288
West Burrafirth Terminal	85,814
Fair Isle Breakwater	1,989
Corran Ferry Terminal	50,839
Uig Ro-Ro Terminal	930,654
Tarbert Ro-Ro Terminal	109,487
Lochmaddy Ro-Ro Terminal	469,728
Tobermory Pier	27,109
Gourock Pier	103,416
Tarbert Ferry Terminal/Marshalling Yard	415,189
Rothesay Pier	46,723
Kennacraig Ferry Terminal	3,843
Mallaig	19,856
Scrabster	10,455
Total Transport	2,798,614
Total Fisheries and Transport	3,352,526

1986-87

	£
Fisheries	
Buckie	72,082
Burghead	26,750
Fraserburgh	866,733
Crail	16,685
Pittenweem	50,000
Kinlochbervie	11,294
Mallaig	121,036
Ullapool	473,943
Port Seton	2,396
Blacksness	17,653
Symbister	2,678
Ary	4,678
Tarbert	18,570
Arbroath	1,976
Total Fisheries	1,686,474
Transport	
Stronsay Terminal	14,974
Moaness Pier, Hoy	29,956
Tingwall, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre Piers	589,016
Achnacroish Ferry Terminal	24,679
Point Lismore Jetty	35,861
Fair Isles Breakwater	1,131
Bruray Ferry Terminal	773
Lochmaddy Ro-Ro Terminal	470,071
Tarbert Ro-Ro Terminal	17,294
Uig Ro-Ro Ferry Terminal	455,140
Corran Ferry Terminal	85,992
Lochaline Slipway	40,322
Tarbert Ferry Terminal/Marshalling Yard	233,430
Oban Pier	122,317
Mallaig	8,981
Scrabster	12,014
	2,141,951
Total Fisheries and Transport	3,828,425

1987-88

	£
Fisheries	
Buckie	34,463
Fraserburgh	278,375
Anstruther	28,452
Wick	23,012
Trumland	25,017
Cullivoe	17,960
Oban	305,338
Total Fisheries	712,617
Transport	
Tingwall, Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre	195,563
Whitehall Pier, Stronsay	5,691
Feolin in Ferry Terminal	18,676
Vaila Pier	49,302
West Burrafirth Terminal	17,164
Corran Ferry Terminal	19,517
Armadale	68,551
Wemyss Bay	140,890
Scalasaig	297,548
Scrabster	5,993
Total Transport	818,895
Total Fisheries and Transport	1,531,512

1988-89

	£
Fisheries	
Lossiemouth	1,899
Anstruther	39,235
Pittenweem	7,155
Mallaig	6,995
Cullivoe	750
Oban	31,694
Arbroath	99,938
Total Fisheries	187,666
Transport	
Moaness Pier, Hoy	2,545
Feolin Ferry Terminal	6,532
Vaila Pier	1,206
Bruray, Out Skerries	116,845
Berneray Harbour	123,359
Scoraig Jetty	29,010
Tobermory	8,300
Wemyss Bay	474,200
Oban Pier	39,000
Scalasaig Pier	172,700
Total Transport	973,697
Total Fisheries and Transport	1,161,363

1989-90

	£
Fisheries	
Fraserburgh	450,639
Peterhead	381,351
Anstruther	643
Gairloch	313,653
Kinlochbervie	791,143
Scrabster	95,909
Kirkwall	109,166
Lerwick	283,693
Total Fisheries	2,426,197
Transport	
Shapinsay Terminal	68,611
Kirkwall	704,765
Ham Voe, Foula	163,572
Lochmaddy	56,023
Castlebay	401,100
Kennacraig	114,100
Lochboisdale	91,800
Total Transport	1,599,971
Total Fisheries and Transport	4,026,168

These sums do not include ERDF grant.

Sub-standard Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what material assistance he intends to give to the residents of 1265 Pollokshaws road, Glasgow, who have bought houses which have subsequently been defined by building societies as being sub-standard and which cannot be resold; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I have explained to the hon. Member in our previous correspondence, the Government are under no direct obligation to provide public resources to assist the owners of this property. I

have, however, written further to the hon. Member about these houses, on which I understand that the district council is now prepared to make an offer of repair grant.

Scottish Natural Heritage Agency

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the relevant bodies which were consulted before the appointment to the board of the Scottish Natural Heritage Agency under section IIIb of the consultation paper "Scotland's Natural Heritage: The Way Ahead"; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Appointments to the board of Scottish Natural Heritage will be made later in the year. My right hon. Friend will be willing to consider nominations from relevant bodies.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects a decision to be taken over the location of the headquarters of the new Scottish Natural Heritage Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The location of the headquarters will be decided following receipt of advice from management consultants who are about to report on the locational, staffing and organisation options for SNH.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the number of additional staff which will be required by the proposed Scottish Natural Heritage Agency; and whether any additional funding for this purpose will be met out of the existing conservation budget.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 16 January 1991]:* Staff numbers for Scottish Natural Heritage will be decided following receipt of advice from management consultants who are about to report on the locational, staffing and organisation options for SNH.

Decisions about the resources for Scottish Natural Heritage will be taken within the timetable and context of the annual public expenditure survey.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Records

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will publish the terms of reference of the scrutiny committee studying public access to criminal records; whether the Data Protection Registrar is involved with the committee's activities; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the then Home Secretary to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) on 28 November 1990 at column *418*. The Data Protection Registrar has been invited to put views to the scrutiny team.

Immigration

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a summary of the cases in which compelling and compassionate circumstances were deemed relevant in his handling of immigration cases.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not collected centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 30 November 1990, *Official Report*, columns *490-91*, regarding the work of the Crown prosecution service and the police, if he will make a further statement on his consideration of the working party's proposals.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The working group's report has been discussed by senior officials of the Home Office, the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Crown prosecution service. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor and my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will shortly be considering their proposals as to how the recommendations contained in that report should be taken forward.

Overseas Students

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many students from overseas undertaking full or part-time education return after their course is completed; and of those who remain how many eventually qualify for residence.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is not available. Our information on embarkations, and on people accepted for settlement, does not comprehensively identify all those admitted as students.

Crime

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out for each of the 43 police forces of England and Wales the number of scenes of crime officers employed and the percentage of crimes cleared up for the most recent 12-month period.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is set out in the table. The figures for the number of scenes of crime officers employed show the position at 31 December 1989, and the percentage of crimes cleared up refers to the whole of 1989. These are the most recent figures available.

	Scenes of crime officers		*Percentage of crimes cleared up*
	Police	*Civilians*	
Avon and Somerset	18	24	33
Bedfordshire	5	8	34
Cambridgshire	7	3	38
Cheshire	11	9	52
Cleveland	17	9	36
Cumbria	5	20	49
Derbyshire	2	26	37
Devon and Cornwall	13	20	36
Dorset	15	4	42
Durham	15	8	42
Essex	44	2	32
Gloucestershire	14	0	36
Greater Manchester	53	1	30
Hampshire	36	2	32
Hertfordshire	19	4	44
Humberside	22	23	35
Kent	15	20	32

	Scenes of crime officers		*Percentage of crimes cleared up*
	Police	*Civilians*	
Lancashire	34	12	40
Leicestershire	4	15	40
Lincolnshire	3	15	42
London, City of	7	5	20
Merseyside	23	0	45
Metropolitan Police	0	181	17
Norfolk	14	9	40
Northamptonshire	2	13	43
Northumbria	32	27	40
North Yorkshire	14	4	35
Nottinghamshire	4	22	35
South Yorkshire	20	11	43
Staffordshire	24	4	43
Suffolk	12	0	43
Surrey	6	14	33
Sussex	22	24	31
Thames Valley	20	15	33
Warwickshire	6	6	35
West Mercia	13	32	39
West Midlands	33	29	39
West Yorkshire	46	15	38
Wiltshire	18	0	46
Dyfed Powys	7	4	52
Gwent	11	0	54
North Wales	0	12	44
South Wales	40	4	39
Total	726	656	
Grand total	1,382		

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what measures he proposes for the maintenance of the existing level of magistrates' judicial independence within the magistrates courts system; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proposals he has to ensure continuance of existing magistrates courts clerks' practice to offer unbiased legal advice to members of their benches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten *[holding answer 17 January 1991]:* It is of fundamental importance that the magistrates courts must remain independent of Government in respect of judicial decision-making and that justices' clerks, in giving advice to their magistrates for this purpose, should act on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the law and of their duty to provide expert and independent advice. In considering any options for changes to the service, whether drawn from the report of the scrutiny of that service or elsewhere, we shall exclude arrangements which do not effectively maintain the independence of magistrates and their clerks at least at its present level.

ENERGY

The Gulf

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to respond to the letter of Dr. John Cox of Wednesday 9 January on environmental consequences of the Gulf war.

Mr. Moynihan: A reply will be sent shortly.

Computers (Security)

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what measures he is taking to ensure the security of *(a)* his Department's computers in-house and *(b)* lap-top personal computers when used by his civil servants outside his Department's offices.

Mr. Wakeham: It is not Government policy to disclose details of the protective security measures for safeguarding computers used for official purposes. To do so would be of assistance to potential attackers and therefore reduce the effectiveness of the measures. These measures are kept under review.

Low-energy Light Bulbs

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will include low-energy light bulbs in his current advertising campaign aimed at promoting domestic energy efficiency.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The current domestic energy efficiency advertising campaign emphasises the improvements in insulation which can be made to older existing housing and explains that such improvements can improve comfort, reduce fuel bills and help to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

The advertisements are designed to encourage readers to send off for the Energy Efficiency Office's new booklet pack entitled "Energy in Your Home". The first of these booklets, "The Energy Friendly Home", contains a section explaining the benefits of low-energy light bulbs.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what compensation he intends for applicants for electricity distributor shares where applicants, through no fault of their own, were classified as non-priority.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department will look into any cases where it is suggested that there may have been an error in the treatment of a particular application. I will then consider the appropriate action.

Oral Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the average length of time taken and the average cost involved of officials' time in his Department preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions.

Mr. Wakeham: The time taken in preparing ministerial briefs for oral parliamentary questions is not routinely recorded in my Department. Estimates are, however, made where there is a likelihood of exceeding the disproportionate cost threshold, currently £250. However, following an interdepartmental exercise in 1972 an assessment was made of the average cost throughout all Departments of answering an oral question. This assessment was based on staff time, using average rates of pay and associated costs for the grades concerned, together with a share of the cost of parliamentary sections and any substantial non-staff costs such as computer usage. This assessed figure is regularly updated and currently stands at £99.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what savings his Department would make were no notice given of oral questions to Ministers and they were answered without civil service time being used on briefings.

Mr. Wakeham: No savings would be made and costs would almost certainly increase significantly. If the oral question is known in advance briefing can be tightly focused, thus avoiding the cost of producing a detailed brief, covering all subjects that could possibly arise.

Oil Supplies

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what action, in the light of commencement of hostilities in the Gulf, is being taken to ensure that oil supplies are maintained.

Mr. Wakeham: The IEA gave notification yesterday morning, 17 January, that the contingency plan agreed last Friday 11 January is now being activated. Member countries agreed that in the event of hostilities in the Gulf they would make available to the market an additional 2·5 million barrels of oil per day through a combination of stockdraw, demand restraint and other measures. The United Kingdom share is 120,000 barrels per day and will come from stocks held by the oil companies.

There are ample supplies at present. This action provides further reassurance that if shortages occur, additional supplies will be available.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 183**

SESSION 1990–91

17th December 1990—18th January, 1991

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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